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ABSTRACT

Reflecting the theories and practices of effective teachers who use a cross-disciplinary approach to enhance writing instruction, this collection of essays is designed to make writing teachers aware of the various possibilities for using film in their classrooms. The ten essays focus on the following topics: (1) combining essay reading and writing with film study in basic composition courses; (2) using films for brainstorming sessions, free-writing exercises, and journal-based assignments; (3) developing a series of three documentary films on the subject of the writing process; (4) giving shape to prose through the use of nonfiction films; (5) using documentary films in the writing classroom; (6) using films in conjunction with literature and composition assignments to develop skills of analysis, interpretation, and argumentation; (7) enhancing students' writing skills through the use of televised drama; (8) using commercial motion pictures for both inclass and home writing assignments; (9) illuminating aspects of written language through the use of "film language"; and (10) teaching writing using an approach based on the analogy of film as composition. Three bibliographies include references for further reading, films listed thematically, and films available through the City University of New York Consortium. (HOD)

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Using Film To Teach Writing

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IMAGES AND WORDS

Using Film to Teach Writing

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PREFACE

One semester twelve years ago when I was teaching writing at Baruch College, I team-taught two classes with Professor Roslyn Mass, who had introduced the first film course at the college. We were experimenting with the use of film in teaching writing, and I discovered a powerful new teaching tool. I never taught a writing class in quite the same way again. I published articles, first on using film to teach writing and then on films themselves. My scholarly interests expanded as a result of my classroom experiences. Yet I knew that most of my colleagues in English Departments were not using film in their writing classes, even some of those who were simultaneously teaching film courses. It is not surprising, then, that when I first came to direct the Instructional Resource Center, more than any other project, I wanted to publish a monograph on writing and film.

Five years went by and, somehow, other special projects always took precedence. Moreover, the idea awaited an editor, a faculty member who shared my passion for films and my belief that film could be an exciting tool for helping students to improve their writing. Then I read an article in Media & Methods by Jeffrey Spielberger and Leo Lieberman, describing their use of film in the writing classroom and citing as examples films which the University owns as part of the CUNY Film Consortium. The three of us met one day, and, during an animated luncheon meeting, the monograph began to take shape. Jeff agreed to act as editor and began to solicit articles focusing, wherever possible, on those which cited films in the Consortium which would be easily available to our faculty.

The going was slow. Despite the fact that cinema studies is now accepted as an academic discipline in colleges and universities throughout the country, film is not much used in other disciplines. The "antiquated" belief of some administrators that teachers use "movies" in classes in order to take a rest from teaching is not so antiquated as many of us who have used film believe it should be. Not surprisingly, English teachers share the general academic distrust of anything not on a printed page or now, perhaps, on a computer screen. Moreover, most see themselves as specialists in literature and some as specialists in linguistics or rhetoric; few feel expert in film.

And yet...there is the experience of those of us who have used a variety of media in our writing classes. We know that writing can be taught--and reading can be approached--through the use of various kinds of film. Why we use film, what films we use, and how we use them is the subject of this monograph. These articles suggest many different uses of film in the writing classroom, reflecting the different experiences, theories, goals, and methodologies of their authors. The commonality is a belief that students must be visually literate as they must be verbally literate, and that both literacies are intertwined, each reinforcing the other and one often a route to the other. In this election year when candidates, concepts, and soapflakes are being sold on television screens, through images perhaps even more than through words, we have dramatic evidence of why a literate person must be literate in both images and words.

In higher education we are moving rapidly into computers as our dominant educational technology, and it would be ironic, indeed, if we did not now re-examine that older technology--film. Fifteen years ago, the Carnegie Commission published The Fourth Revolution: Instructional Technology in Higher Education, which forecast a radical change in teaching at all levels in the next decade and predicted that classrooms would be revolutionized by the new technologies of film and television. Fifteen years later, although these technologies have indeed changed the way in which most people get their information about the world in which they live, they have not had the impact on classrooms predicted by the Carnegie Commission. It is precisely in these classrooms that the examination of images and words should take place. I like the fact that the essays in this monograph reflect, above all, the theories and practices of effective teachers who use a cross-disciplinary approach to teach their students far more than just writing.

Marie Jean Lederman

INTRODUCTION

When Leo Lieberman and I wrote an article describing our use of film in basic writing courses a few years ago, we were responding in part to colleagues who had heard of our program and were aware that the rates of retention and success in our classes far exceeded the department mean. Moreover, some of these colleagues had heard from our students that reacting to films was an exciting (and even enjoyable) way to develop writing and thinking skills. And so several other instructors were encouraged to experiment with film in their writing classes. Their experiences, and the experiences of the contributors to this issue of Resource, suggest that students would benefit greatly if more instructors were to utilize film in their teaching.

Unfortunately, it seems that although the NCTE Commission on Media has issued a statement strongly supporting the integration of media into English and language arts classrooms, and although the CUNY Consortium catalogs several thousand films readily available for viewing, only a very small number of instructors of basic writing employ films as a significant component of their coursework. Thus the purpose of this collection: to make teachers of writing aware of the various possibilities for using film in their classrooms, to help them to discover that, as Marie Jean Lederman points out early in her preface, film can be "a powerful new teaching tool."

In the first article, LEO LIEBERMAN and I employ a light tone to frame what we hope is some good practical information about combining essay-reading and writing with film study in basic composition courses. LES KEYSER's contribution follows with more detailed advice for a comprehensive curriculum, including ideas concerning using films for brainstorming sessions, free-writing exercises, and journal-based assignments. His essay is filled with specific writing project suggestions as well as with comments about student reactions.

Then comes an article by ALICE TRILLIN, in part presenting her objectives in developing a series of three documentary films on the subject of the writing process. She contends that "the only thing that matters in the teaching of writing...is the way in which we encourage students to produce particular pieces of writing, and the way in which we respond to these pieces as readers."

RICHARD BARSAM is also concerned with the value of nonfiction films for teachers of writing. He supplies many examples to support the view that, "From a study of the structure of the non-fiction film, both composition teacher and student alike can find numerous ways in which to approach the problem of giving shape to prose, reducing its clutter, enhancing its clarity, and achieving unity."

The next three essays provide a further examination of the value of documentary films in the writing classroom. FRANK HAASE describes how a film ordinarily viewed in Biology was employed in the English class, and how students were asked to respond to it as if they were writing a filmscript. LARAINE FERGENSON recounts her experience with a film about Emily Dickinson to explain how she came to realize "the importance of thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating experiences for basic writing students."

LEO LIEBERMAN shows how to develop a lesson that employs a powerful film about the Holocaust to spur even the most reticent student writer.

Then a few articles detail the use of films in conjunction with literature and composition assignments to help students develop skills of analysis, interpretation, and argumentation. THELMA SCHENKEL shows how short, poetic films that rely on metaphor and analogy may be used to teach elements of effective expository prose. NORA CHASE relates her experience using a group of films to help students in an interdisciplinary course "to understand course readings and facilitate the transfer of concepts and methods to their own research and writing." MARIE JEAN LEDERMAN presents the view that by teaching short stories through film in basic composition classes, she encourages students "to observe, to evaluate, to think, to make connections...to look for detail and structure, and this makes them better writers."

The focus of the next two authors is somewhat different from that of the preceding contributors. VERA JIJI explains how televised drama may be utilized to enhance students' writing skills and to provide material for research projects. FRANK MASIELLO considers the significance of commercial motion pictures for both in-class and home writing assignments.

In the final set of essays, BRIAN GALLAGHER demonstrates how "film 'language' can be employed to illuminate aspects of written language." He suggests a number of teaching techniques and uses of film in lessons and assignments ranging from description to comparison/contrast to argumentation. WILLIAM COSTANZO's commentary sums up much of the current thinking about film and writing. He describes his approach to teaching writing based on the analogy of film as composition, concluding that his students' writing "is invariably informed by the visual compositions that were seen or practiced, and by our discussions of them." For the instructor who wishes to read further, he provides a comprehensive selected biography.

The last section of the journal contains two other bibliographies. The first shows what one group of faculty has done to advance the use of film to teach writing skills. The selection, excerpted from LaGuardia Community College's Film and Writing Guide, includes a bibliography of films listed thematically and three sample lessons. The other bibliography is a listing of Consortium-owned films cited in the articles in this collection, noting running times and the CUNY unit(s) from which the films can be obtained.

After many years of using film to teach composition, I began this project thinking that I knew a great deal about the subject. But reading the essays in this collection has made me aware of how creative some of my colleagues are in their work and how much more there is to know about employing film to teach writing. If this issue of Resource fulfills its purpose, perhaps other teachers of writing will see how valuable film can be as an aid in their difficult task.

* * *

For initiating and supporting this project, I thank Marie Jean Lederman, an administrator who has not forgotten what it is like to be in the classroom. I also thank Virginia Slaughter, Coordinator of the Instructional Resource

Center, and a wise and sensitive editor. I am grateful as well to Richard Barsam who shared his knowledge of film with me, Karim Feijoo who spent several months between graduation and the Peace Corps researching for this issue, and Barry Kwalick who gave a close reading to the final draft. Naturally, I am especially appreciative of all the teachers of writing and film at CUNY whose contributions and suggestions have made this special issue of Resource possible.

Jeffrey Spielberger
December 1, 1984

Jeffrey Spielberger and
Leo Lieberman

FILM AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR WRITING

There are very few fortunates who have never faced a blank piece of paper with an equally blank mind. Those of us who have had this frustrating experience can empathize a wee bit with students in basic writing courses. "Write!" commands the mentor, and the student looks down upon the clean, white paper hoping that through some mystical intervention a voice will come from on high and the student will become an amanuensis to some greater force which will dictate an acceptable theme. Unfortunately, such dictation ceased with the demise of Cecil B. DeMille.

I remember, when I was in the third grade there was a girl named Lulu Stitz in the second row. Whenever we were given white composition paper--a Friday ritual--and were told by Mrs. Peters to "write," Lulu would throw up all over the blue-lined paper.

Somehow I feel that Lulu had much in common with my basic writers, and although none has yet "whoopsed" in my English 01 class (thank goodness), the nail biting, pencil breaking, sickly complexions, and assorted tics lead me to believe that Lulu's malaise could infect my students at any time.

I once asked a class what the problem seemed to be. "Lie back and tell me all about it" was the tone of my request, and, surprisingly enough, I received some answers.

"I have nothing to say."
"I don't know what to write about."
"I have no ideas."

I listened and wanted to respond with, "Nothing to say! No ideas! You are all college men and women." That's what I wanted to say--but didn't. Instead, I sat down with a colleague, and together we planned a frontal attack. This is the format we devised.

Jeffrey Spielberger, Assistant Professor of English at Bronx Community College, recently developed a Handbook for Instructors in the BCC English Department and co-authored College Board Achievement Test: English Composition (Arco Publishing, Inc.).

Leo Lieberman, Professor of English at Bronx Community College, has been a teacher, administrator, and supervisor for over three decades. He is currently completing a book, Classics of Jewish Literature (Philosophical Library). This article is reprinted with permission of Media & Methods, in which it appeared in December 1981.

We decided to counterbalance the problem of a lack of ideas by embarking on a program that would make intensive use of audiovisual materials in addition to standard class discussions and essay-reading. We obtained the assistance of our excellent audiovisual staff so that we could incorporate film into each week's unit.

For our first class theme, we started with a subject that concerns everyone: "Who am I?" From Emily Dickinson's well-known lyric, "I'm nobody! Who are you?" to excerpts from biographical studies of Mahatma Gandhi, Golda Meir, Helen Keller, and Richard Wright, we went on to a short film, That's Me (1971), starring Alan Arkin, about a school dropout and a social worker who come to terms with each other and themselves. After two sessions of reading, viewing, and discussing, we were ready to write, to try to discover "the me nobody knows." By then students were ready for the writing experience and were less reluctant to share opinions and to express ideas in written form.

From people we went on to places. After trying to discover "Who am I?" we felt that we needed to pinpoint ourselves in a place. We began with two films that seemed to fit admirably: Harlem Wednesday (1959) incorporates art and music; to a jazz background, paintings recalling life in Harlem during the 1920s and 30s are flashed on the screen. Except the People (1971) depicts life in New York City's East Village during the 1960s with varied cinematography; there are close-ups, distortions, flashbacks, and a mixture of color shots and black and white clips.

Then our students explored places through literature. They were introduced to rural life in Mark Twain's "Memories of a Missouri Farm," to New York's Spanish Harlem by a chapter from Piri Thomas' Down These Mean Streets, to the shtetl of Eastern Europe through excerpts from the stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer, to a section of North Africa in George Orwell's "Marrakech." More discussion . . . paper and pens . . . "Write!"

There was a choice of topics: "From My Window" or "A Place I'd Like to Visit." A number of students were going to the library to leaf through old copies of National Geographic or investigate the Travel Section of The New York Times. A few who showed special promise were directed to James Agee's "Knoxville: Summer 1915" and H. L. Mencken's "Libido for the Ugly." Compositions were written and shared and discussed: How can we improve? What interferes with communication? What aspect was particularly powerful? Where was the description vivid?

Already several students were beginning to ask about the next series of films. So for our third act we presented "The Rites of Passage" with four provocative works: Summerplay (1970), The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1962), Luke was There (1975), and The Eye of the Storm (1971). Aging, adolescence, feminism, prejudice, role playing--all became items for discussion. Again in our educational bag of tricks there were literary samples to be examined at the right moment: Walter Lippmann's thoughts on "Stereotypes," Abraham Heschel's comments concerning "Old Age," James Baldwin's Notes of a Native Son, Bruno Bettleheim's "Joey: A 'Mechanical Boy'," excerpts from Gail Sheehy's Passages and Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique. Our aim was to get students to read, to analyze, to react and, of course, to write--but primarily to think. Again, our utilizing films in

conjunction with printed material stimulated student interest and written expression far more than had the written word alone.

Our last unit, "What I Believe," began with an analysis of Denise Levertov's poem about the people of Vietnam, "What Were They Like?" followed by Edmund Burke's observation that "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Once we added two short poems by Nellie Sachs and that remarkable section of Andre Schwartzbart's Last of the Just that deals with death in the concentration camp, students were ready for a serious examination of the nature of life and death.

Several films proved highly effective in this unit: The Hangman (1964), based on a poem by Maurice Ogden; The Lottery (1969) from Shirley Jackson's story; Andy Rooney's Essay on War (1971); Alain Resnais' Night and Fog (1962); and Just Lather, That's All (1975), from a story by Hernando Tellez. (The latter spurred one student to write a theme comparing the original story in Spanish with its English translation, then comparing both with the film counterpart.)

Now everyone was writing. Some offered critiques of essays or of films; others expounded on their own philosophy of life. Some retold personal incidents and others editorialized. All were excited and everyone had something to say.

We came to the end of the semester. It was time to evaluate. Certainly there was no doubt that the past few months had been an exciting experience for professors and students. But the proof of the pudding is in . . . the final examination (graded by a group whose members did not include the students' own professors) to determine who was qualified to proceed to Freshman Composition and who needed more preparation. In our department as a whole, the average percentage of basic writing students passing at the end of the semester was 56 percent; in our class, 82 percent succeeded. Moreover, whereas the average percentage of students who remained in class and did not drop out was 64 percent in the department as a whole, in our class a retention rate of 92 percent resulted. The figures established what we felt all along--that students were learning and that they were enjoying the learning experience. Comments from class members confirmed this.

We realize that this is not a "how to" article, nor a sample from an educational cookbook--a recipe for achieving instant success with reluctant writers. Our purpose is simply to describe a technique for developing within students who have serious writing deficiencies the desire to communicate their ideas effectively through writing. Our vehicle was film since this seemed to provide a natural springboard for students who have been geared to audiovisual rather than to written forms of expression and communication.

As we think back over that past semester and so many other past semesters (many of which were not so successful), we cannot help but wonder how many Lulus might have been spared the agonizing ordeal of the white paper had this approach to teaching writing been used. And we think too of the relief that would have come to those not-so-hardy souls who were seated alongside Lulu.

Les Keyser

VISUAL COMPOSITION

Perhaps it all comes down to that old canard heard so frequently in the film and literature classroom: When asked to define his purpose in writing, Joseph Conrad exclaimed, "I want to make you see!" Asked the same question about his films, D.W. Griffith declared, "Above all, I want to make you see."

But what is this vision the artist seeks and which we as teachers try to convey? Walter Gibson in his persuasive text Seeing and Writing argues that all of us actually compose the world as we perceive it. John Stuart Katz in his essay, "An Integrated Approach to the Teaching of Film and Literature" (E.Q., Winter 1969) makes this more explicit when he observes that true vision enables "the viewer to go beyond apprehending to comprehending, to go beyond visceral reaction to an understanding of the sense of the work."

Most of us know by now that both apprehending and comprehending are the nuts and bolts of freshman composition and that teaching must generate energetic visceral reactions if understanding is ever to take place. Our individual departments may arrange course sequences differently, number sections differently, and announce their goals in different formulations, but a consensus does seem to be emerging--writing must be taught from the inside out. Students must find an authentic voice and then refine it, progressing from self-discovery to argument and exposition and finally to literary analysis.

Film can play an important role at each stage in this process. Cinema is, after all, the double features we ran to see on Saturday afternoons; motion pictures are America's most popular and pervasive art. The pleasurable, somewhat shadowy world of dreams, heroes, and emotions, premiering weekly at our local bijou, has, as film historian Robert Sklar noted, "made" America. All the startling statistical studies of how many hours of film and television Americans have been exposed to pale into insignificance when the first images flicker on the screen in a composition class. We have been raised on visual compositions of a high order; tapping that reservoir of significant structures can afford rich opportunities both for content in writing and for a discovery and discussion of structure and form.

Les Keyser, Associate Professor of English, teaches film, literature, and writing in the Weekend College at the Sunnyside Campus of the College of Staten Island.

One of the most fruitful areas for using films in the classroom is in discussions of pre-writing and brainstorming. Anyone who has employed a workshop approach to developmental writing knows how important it is that energy levels remain high, that students be encouraged to trust their own perceptions, and that the discussions be lively and wide-ranging. One must be eager to say something if the arduous process of writing is ever to be undertaken. In this context, abstract and experimental films are quite useful; their very openness and innovation virtually demand comment. James Whitney's Lapis (1967), for example, is such a free-ranging experience that, as one critic said, it "sucks the viewer into a metaphysical voyage." Class themes about this short film, assigned as free-writing and then read aloud, usually trigger quite lively discussions of each author's cosmology and world view. Students quickly discover their unique value systems and frequently strive to justify them in more extended papers. This exercise can be supplemented by other cosmic and somewhat psychedelic short films like Donald Fox's Omega (1970), an invitation to a cosmic journey; Cosmic Zoom (1969), an essay on scale in the natural world; and Permutations (1968), a computer-made film which presents the variations of an equation in geometry. Somewhat more somber treatment of the transmutation of matter, time, and space may be found in Renaissance (1963). All of these films, and all of the films mentioned in this paper, are available through the CUNY Consortium.

If metaphysics seems a trifle too abstract an area to start brainstorming, one might consider some short films which are really essays in seeing and describing the physical world in emotional ways. Getting students to understand subjectivity, tone, mood, and nuance is frequently one of our most ticklish concerns. Free-writing exercises based on A Dream of Wild Horses (1962), an evocative portrait of the wild horses of the Camargue district of France, set to the music of Jacques Lapsy, often open doors that more conventional approaches utilizing descriptive prose cannot budge. As a shared experience, this short film makes students confront each other's reactions directly, and the openness of its form allows great freedom in interpretation and reaction. Good essays frequently emerge from such leading questions as "How does this film make you feel?" or "What is your overwhelming impression of these horses?" Other descriptive films worth considering for this type of brainstorming exercise include titles like Lament: For Ignacio Sanchez Mejias (1979), a musing on Lorca's poem on the death of a bullfighter, or Jazzoo (1967), a kaleidoscopic portrait of a city zoo on an early summer day, set to a fine jazz score.

For students who are ready to move from personal and descriptive writing to a more analytical level, the Consortium also offers some experimental and abstract shorts which almost force the viewer into exposition and argumentation. One big surprise hit is Clay, or the Origin of the Species (1964), an animation which generates discussions of evolution, a surprisingly provocative topic today. Teachers who feel comfortable setting up another Scopes trial in their classrooms will discover that research papers are manageable when they grow out of intense in-class discussions. Clay is the type of film which can trigger a month's worth of analysis and argument. Similarly, Hangman (1964), loosely based on a poem by Maurice Ogden, a parable about a self-styled prosecutor in a never-ending quest to destroy the weakest first, frequently leads to class discussions of contemporary history, fascism, and the Holocaust. Needless to say, passions run high, and many students become so engaged that the discussion leads quickly to an analysis of

effective argument and competent research. Although they are slightly more abstract and allegorical, Flatland (1965), an animation, and A Line is a Line is a Line (1972), Urs Graf's short which incorporates Bach's beautiful "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor," are interesting musings on conformity. If students respond to this topic, a dazzling continuation is available in Obedience (1965), a longer study of the Milgram psychological experiments, in which seemingly normal human beings agreed to do some most abnormal things to others. Obedience is a powerful film, and student papers on "What would you do?" often turn out to be intensely personal and powerful documents. Students also respond quite powerfully to The Hand (1966) and to Norman McLaren's Neighbors (1952), two variations on the causes of wars. Again, any of these discussions can be developed into a longer topical unit, and it is amazing how much impetus the shared experience of a film provides.

In addition to using these free-writing, brainstorming sessions to develop argumentative skills, many of us like to use them to instill a sense of language and metaphor. To see well is to see connections, and while Eisenstein's theory of montage may simplify film theory unnecessarily, editing and montage are central to filmmaking. An amusing introduction to art as a process of finding metaphor and analogues is afforded by Saul Bass' Why Man Creates (1968), a series of digressions on the nature of art; this short should be supplemented by Bass' film The Searching Eye (1964), an exemplum of this theory in action. For New Yorkers, the most exciting of these metaphor films is probably Hillary Harris's Organism (1975), a truly bedazzling presentation of the metropolis as a living tissue. Hailed as the best short at the 1975 New York Film Festival, Organism shocks and then delights. Students never fail to react to this film; semesters later they want to stop on campus and talk more about it. Other successful metaphor films include A Chairy Tale (1957) in which absurdist philosophy is captured in a hilarious sequence pitting man against a chair which will not be sat in; Film (1965), a wordless, one-act Becket play about loneliness, identity, and death; and the Zagreb short, A Journey (1972), in which a train ride becomes a metaphor for life. The seven passengers who disappear on this trip can easily be compared with Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man," a juxtaposition students relish. Bruce Connor's A Movie (1957) reduces the metaphor of association to the absurd, with his found footage culminating in an apocalyptic vision of World War III.

One interesting writing assignment to try with these metaphoric films was suggested years ago by a colleague, Ely Stock. Starting with Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son," Professor Stock asked his students to change the metaphor "Life for me ain't been no crystal staircase" to another of their choosing and then to develop their own poem. This is a sophisticated and effective variant on "Happiness is a _____" exercises, and students seem to love it.

Connections can, of course, go beyond individual art pieces. Lenny Bruce's Thank You, Masked Man (1969) still shocks some audiences and can be used as a jumping-off point to write comic dialogues between Batman and Robin, Starsky and Hutch, or Superman and Lois Lane. Students enjoy the pre-established characters and conventions, yet relish the iconoclasm of debunking.

If all of these exercises generate worthwhile writing, they can be followed up with more traditional explorations of metaphor and symbol. Alexander Neel's Baggage (1969), a portrait of one person carrying psychological and emotional baggage through San Francisco, can serve as an effective companion piece to Polanski's film school effort, Two Men and a Wardrobe (1961). These films need more careful introductions, but they can lead to exciting writing projects.

The very best composition texts recently have been focusing on self-awareness as a prelude to writing, so that using intensely personal films can provide rich raw materials for a communications workshop. Focusing on the movement from interior to exterior, instructors might choose the many short films which juxtapose childhood memories with adult realities. A classic in this genre is Scenes From Under Childhood: Selection Number One (1967), an abridgement of Stan Brakhage's underground masterpiece. The images in this film are subtle and sometimes terrifying, and it might best be used as part of a series of childhood films, including Frank Film (1974), Sea Travels (1978), and My Name is Oona (1970). One good writing exercise to use in conjunction with these titles has been suggested by my colleague Herb Liebman. The instructor has students describe in detail their earliest childhood memories. The class then reads and discusses them. Then, the instructor has the students write a fictitious rationale for holding that memory so dear. Next, each student writes the seemingly "real" reason each memory is so persistent. The final step is to compare the real reason and the fictitious one to uncover hidden connections and motivations.

These explorations of childhood memories of innocence and experience might even justify using some longer films including A Child's Eye View (1979), a composite of eleven films from around the world, all by children about their childhood, and Francois Truffaut's Wild Child (1969), a loving study of a feral youth which quickly becomes a tender essay on love and learning. Presented with enough concern for individual expressions and with enough support for student efforts, these exercises in autobiography can lead to powerful entries in an ongoing student journal, which in turn can be developed into forceful prose narratives.

In classes in which this autobiographical, journal-based writing proves effective, still other films could be quite useful, including My Childhood (1964), which contrasts James Baldwin's early life with the youthful memories of Hubert Humphrey. The film raises substantial questions about wealth and poverty and black and white lifestyles in America. Finally, one might explore how this material has been treated in art by screening Paul's Case (1977), a Lamont Johnson short based on a short story by Willa Cather and effectively narrated by Henry Fonda. The basic tale concerns a young man's journey to New York City at the turn of the century. Since we live in New York, this idea of the city as a place that shapes our destinies could also be explored in films such as Francis Thompson's New York, New York (1960), The Third Avenue El (1970), or the previously mentioned Organism. For classes ready to confront larger questions of life in the city, Frederick Wiseman's Welfare (1975), filmed at a Greenwich Village welfare office, provides enough material for a semester. Wiseman's films are terrific for writing classes since he eschews any verbal commentary; audiences must provide the editorializing based on his editing of reality.

When we try to move from personal probing to ardent editorializing, film can be a big help. Most writing courses eventually focus on argumentative or expository prose, and the lament is frequently heard that students don't care about the topics or have too little to say. Film can be a most effective tool in engaging student interest and providing the raw materials for argument.

Every instructor, naturally, has his favorite topics for discussion, but a short consideration of some contemporary favorites may suggest how rich the Consortium is with controversial films. Take, for instance, the question of criminal justice in America. The Consortium has recently acquired Murder One (1978), a chilling work in which six convicted murderers speak for themselves about crime and punishment. Also available are Hard Time (1980), an inmate's view of Joliet prison and the system, and Attica (1974), a partisan documentary on New York State's tragic prison riot and its aftermath. Law and order as an issue haunts the American consciousness; these short journeys into different physical and psychic universes frequently prompt extraordinary writing and speaking from students. For ecological questions, the Consortium offers such a rich choice as Alone in the Midst of the Land (1970), a stunningly logical and frightening vision of pollution. And for arguments about nuclear weapons and war, the Consortium has The Hat: Is This War Necessary? (1967), featuring Dizzy Gillespie and Dudley Moore in an inspired improvisation on the question, and Star Spangled Banner (1971), a surrealistic interpretation of the "grass roots version" of our national anthem. More advanced classes might even consider Night and Fog (1955), and the long suppressed footage of Hiroshima-Nagasaki: August 1945 (1969), as a prelude to Hiroshima, Mon Amour (1959).

Still another interesting topic for discussion and debate is the whole question of effective education. America has recently rediscovered its schools, and students might well be challenged again by the unorthodox views of A.S. Neil in Summerhill (1967). Frederick Wiseman also provides a challenging text in his work High School (1969), a cinema verite visit to Northeastern High School in Pittsburgh. All the members of the staff there seem pleased with what they're doing, yet many media critics have labelled this film "an essay on emptiness." Students might well enjoy writing on whether their high school years were an "empty" experience. A good conclusion to discussions on education and individual freedom, on culture and conformity, would be a screening of Peter Brooks' Lord of the Flies (1963), a captivating interpretation of the Golding novel.

Interesting student papers also result from a consideration of sex roles in America, and the Consortium has some excellent titles on this topic, including Men's Lives (1974) and Growing Up Female (1971). One sleeper in this category is Beauty Knows No Pain (1971), a portrait of champion drum majorettes, which raises substantial issues about sex stereotyping and the validity of middle class values in America. Everyone associated with the Kilgore team seems proud of what she's doing, yet the film nags with the question, "Is this worth doing?" Students usually offer quite diverse and revealing answers to this question. Further discussions of sex roles and of male/female relationships can be prompted by films like The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980), a complex treatment of American popular culture's stereotypes and women's deeper concerns; The Jogger (1971), a disarming portrait of the dissolution of a marriage; and Norman McLaren's Pas de Deux (1969), a ballet film which provides a commentary on human yearnings.

Somewhat more risque treatments of human relations are provided by Free (1969), a lyric presentation of lovemaking in an open field, and Expressway to Your Heart (1969), one of the finest short films produced at New York University. Expressway is a spoof of modern films and contemporary sex manuals; in it, road signs are flashed over the bodies of a couple making love.

For classes which proceed beyond exposition and argumentation to literary analysis, the Consortium is an almost indispensable resource. Many classic stories, novels, and plays have been filmed and a good choice of titles is available in CUNY. A few films are worth considering for most classes: Mel Brooks' The Critic (1963) is just too short and too funny to be missed. And for any class on the importance of selection and arrangement, a film entitled Interpretations and Values (1964) shows the raw materials for a Gunsmoke (1953) sequence being filmed, and then provides three contrasting editings of these materials.

For more advanced students, Werner Herzog's The Great Ecstasy of the Sculptor Steiner (1975), uses sports to comment on the ever escalating demands of an audience; the film also shows a fine director working at the peak of his powers. Mr. Frenhofer and the Minotaur (1949), is a complex adaptation of Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece," and its unusual narration affords some insights concerning modern art. For the very best students it could be supplemented with a very challenging text, Roland Barthes' S/Z.

For those of us assaying structuralist readings of Balzac as well as for the majority of us working on basic literacy, film can be more than an added attraction. It can be a feature presentation for those courses in which we ask students to share their vision with us.

Alice Trillin

FILM AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING

A number of years ago when I was beginning to think about ways that film could be used in the teaching of writing, I told a friend of mine about what I was doing. He said that although he admired my enterprise, he thought I had taken on an impossible task and wondered why I was trying to do something that had so little chance of success. Why in the world choose writing as the subject for educational films? Was there any subject more difficult to teach than writing, and was there anything more difficult to illuminate with film, that most concrete of media, than the abstract notion of how words get put on paper? Over the past four years, while the three films in the WRITERS WRITING series that will appear on public television in the spring of 1985 have been in development, I have been attempting to answer his question.

During the years when, as a consultant to WNET/Thirteen and as a member of the City University's Instructional Resource Center, I looked at hundreds of films that were meant to be educational, I became interested in the question of what film could and could not do better than any other medium. It seemed to me that a great deal of money had been spent on making films that conveyed information which could have been conveyed more easily in a nicely illustrated textbook. The argument for such films, of course, points to the astonishing "visual literacy" of today's students, and of their equally astonishing willingness to pay attention to anything that moves on a screen. I have always been suspicious of this argument. Having watched my own children watch television, I know about that strange semi-comotose state that images on a screen induce and have always wondered how well any information conveyed by these images is absorbed and retained. The messages on the screen have always seemed to me strongest not when they convey information but when they provoke some kind of response from the viewer, awakening him from his coma, and I had noticed that this response was most likely to occur in films that presented some kind of question and when the juxtaposition of images suggested not one but a number of possible answers to that question. I realized that the few moments in the hundreds of hours of film footage I had watched in which this happened all took place in films that were documentary.

There are, of course, many kinds of documentary films; documentaries make up a large proportion of most educational film catalogues. Those that interested me were not necessarily the ones that had been intended to be educational; on the contrary, most educational documentaries reminded me of those moments in junior high school when a screen was rolled down, the lights were dimmed, and a classroom full of children caught up on their sleep as a

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familiar voice began, "The circulatory system can be described by a simple chart...." But I had seen a number of documentaries in which some kind of learning seemed to be going on, if learning can be defined as a moment in which one discovers something not previously known. In the best of these films, viewers were not told exactly what they were supposed to be thinking, but were invited to interpret what they were seeing. For example,[2] in Peter Davis's Campaign (1982), part of the Middletown series, we are shown in great detail the process of a mayoral campaign and we learn so much about the two opposing candidates that we are sure that we know who will win the election. When we discover that we were wrong, we also find out something about the American political system that we probably hadn't known before. Or if we had known it, we knew it in the abstract and had not experienced it concretely, as the film allowed us to do.

As a teacher of writing I know that very little abstract information about writing has ever helped anyone learn to write better. When I began teaching writing, more than twenty years ago, I dutifully took my students through the chapters in Sheridan Baker and drew triangles and inverted pyramids on the board to teach them the structure of an essay. Later I tried more modern approaches, but the flow charts and complicated maps of mental processes I constructed were no more helpful than the triangles and pyramids had been. It isn't my purpose here to trace my evolution from that position in front of the blackboard, but after twenty years as a teacher, editor and writer, I no longer believe that very much of what we tell students about how to write has a great deal of value. The only thing that matters in the teaching of writing, it seems to me now, is the way in which we encourage students to produce particular pieces of writing, and the way in which we respond to these pieces as readers.

It was in the first of these areas that I thought there might be some role for film. There has been an enormous change in the past decade in the way that teachers are learning to respond to students' writing, and this kind of change is best accomplished by the kind of intensive workshops carried on by organizations like the National Writing Project and the Breadloaf School of English. But it might be possible to make films that would help students produce pieces of writing by showing them particular pieces of writing being created, by, in a sense, letting them get inside the heads of the writers who were writing these pieces. Such films would be in fact two films intercut -- one a documentary presenting the subject for a piece of writing, and the other a documentary about one or more writers trying to make sense of this subject. The films would provide a stimulus for writing at the same time that they suggested a model of the writing process.

The subject to be written about had to provide material rich and complex enough to suggest a number of possible interpretations, both to the writers in the film and to student viewers. The trouble with most essay topics proposed by teachers and textbooks (and this is particularly true of the supposedly "simple" topics considered appropriate for beginning writers) is that the questions they raise are not real ones, but have built-in answers that students must somehow discover. The best stimulus to writing--for beginning writers as well as for experienced ones--is a question that provokes a real search for meaning. There are many questions like this--the discussion of a reading, that most conventional of assignments, can be as effective a stimulus for writing as the search for a student's roots through an interview with a

grandparent. The trick is not in finding topics that are "interesting" for students, but in showing them how to make topics interesting to themselves by making them their own. The best description of an effective stimulus for writing I have ever read is in C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon's recent book, Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing:[3] "[A stimulus to write] represents a challenge to probe, investigate, draw conclusions....[it] ought to suggest something problematic, something that will give rise to questions, a dilemma or polarity, a clash of competing values, a paradox, puzzle, or anomaly, a confusion or mystery, anything that excites wonder or speculation or reflection or curiosity, anything that stimulates the deep, natural, human need to order things by means of symbolic action." If the films in the WRITERS WRITING series succeed in providing this kind of stimulus, it is because they were made by documentary filmmakers who like making films that raise more questions than they answer, as much as because of the compelling nature of their subject matter. The subjects are all interesting to me--although I am more interested in the gentrification of a street in an Italian neighborhood in New York described in the first film in the series than I am in the nineteen-year-old Cuban boxer in the second film, and I know that the brutal eviction proceedings in Washington, D.C. that take place in the third film provide the most dramatic subject, and I think that they will be interesting to students. But I hope that the interest of the viewer will shift, at some point in each film, from the subject that is being written about to the attempt of each of the writers, and of the viewer, to make sense of this subject.

It was the filmmakers' challenge to make films about the writing process as compelling as the stories they were documenting about a neighborhood or a prizefight or an eviction. It was my challenge to make clear to the filmmakers exactly what aspects of the writing process the films should portray. A great deal has been written recently about the "the writing process." Like everyone else, I am happy that students are being encouraged to write multiple drafts and to worry less about finished products until they edit their pieces. But I also worry that our recent obsession with process has created some confusion. There are a number of textbooks on the market, for instance, that tell students that they should "freewrite" and brainstorm" and then write a number of drafts; these same texts also lead students through exercises in writing topic sentences and descriptive paragraphs. Much of what has been said about the writing process gives the impression that it is a question of mechanics, of using the right kind of paper, of always brainstorming before writing anything, of always writing first drafts (sometimes called "discovery drafts") very quickly, of always producing a second draft that is radically different from the first, and so on. None of this is dangerous--except perhaps for the new jargon it has produced--but most of it is too general to be useful. I know that I, for one, am simply unable to write most of my first drafts very quickly, and although most of what I write is revised, the best things I have ever written have changed very little from first draft to last. That is because my writing process, in this mechanical sense, is necessarily very different from anyone else's.

But it is also possible to describe the writing process as a way of thinking--as the making of meaning. It is possible to think of writing not as a process of finding pre-existing forms to fit pre-existing meaning--as what Ann Berthoff[4] calls the cookie-cutter approach--but instead as a process of observation and speculation aimed at discovering meaning, and to think of form

as a way of expressing and clarifying this developing meaning. Viewed this way, writing has less to do with triangles and pyramids and heuristic flow charts than it has to do with the way that we make sense of the world.

Each of the three films in the WRITERS WRITING series views the writing process in this way, and each shows writers struggling to discover meaning. For the sake of pedagogical neatness, I tried in each film to focus on a dimension of the writing process--dimensions I thought of as seeing, forming and re-forming. But the films are unscripted documentaries, and real writing doesn't divide itself up quite so neatly--our writers insisted on seeing, forming and re-forming in all three films. However, each film does make a somewhat different point about the writing process and does shift focus to suit my pedagogical purposes. In the first film, called Before the First Word, Anna Quindlen, who was writing her "About New York" column for The New York Times, and two high school students are all writing about Sullivan Street in New York's Little Italy. During most of the film the writers are doing what Ann Berthoff calls "generating chaos"[5]--discovering the conflicting views of the neighborhood and constantly changing their minds about what they think about what they see. They try to suspend their own preconceptions, and only at the end of the film do the patterns and connections that have emerged from the chaos begin to lead each of them to find a focus for the piece that he or she will write.

In the second film, Telling An Old Story (1985), Madelaine Blaise, a feature writer for the Miami Herald, starts out to write a story about an 87-year-old woman who is a community activist and ends up writing about a nineteen-year-old Cuban boxer. We see her generating chaos, and we also see her getting stuck, not knowing how she will find her way out of all the possibilities her reporting has created. It is only when she is able to go beyond the obvious way of writing about the boxer--when she finds a new way to tell an old story--that she can begin to write. The shape of her story emerges from the contradictions she sees in the material, and this shape helps to clarify these contradictions.

In the third film, Pieces of a Puzzle (1985), Courtland Milloy, a columnist for the Washington Post, along with a young woman who is a student in a college writing class he teaches, writes about a dramatic series of evictions taking place in Washington, D.C. Milloy's first attempt to write his story is highly emotional and exposes his preconceptions about the eviction proceeding, about what he sees as "the system gone wrong." As he looks and looks again at what is happening and discovers that the reasons for the evictions are more complicated than he at first thought, he writes and rewrites his story a number of times, each time leaving out something he had been particularly attached to in an earlier draft, and adding something he has learned by follow-up reporting. His student, on the other hand, writes a very personal story about the members of the eviction crew, then attempts to broaden her point of view, and finally returns to focus on the aspect of the story that originally attracted her. Milloy's process of revision is not better than his student's--it is simply more suitable for the purposes of the particular piece he decides to write. To both writers, revision is a process of struggling with meaning, of being willing to continually re-examine the material and the words on the page until the meaning becomes clear.

There were critics of Before the First Word (the only film in the series yet in distribution) who were disappointed because it didn't offer direct instruction about coherence, paragraph development, sentence structure, word choice, and so on. None of the films mentions these matters because I think that almost any generalization about them is useless. Even those generalizations that probably apply more often than most--the imperious admonitions of Professor Strunk handed down so gracefully by Mr. White--are not very helpful unless invoked in reference to a particular piece of writing. Teachers should, of course, talk to students about coherence, paragraph development, even grammar and spelling, as long as these conversations focus on clarifying the developing meaning of a particular piece of writing. It is amazing how often writers will find for themselves the solutions to problems their teachers think of as technical as they begin to discover what it is that they are trying to say.

It would be possible, I suppose, to derive some kind of hard and fast rules about writing from these films, and I sometimes imagine what these rules might be like: "Never start writing until you have gathered all of your material and are thoroughly confused"; "Always write the opposite of what you first thought you would write about"; "Always turn objective writing into personal writing;" or "Always turn personal writing into objective writing." I hope that instead of looking for rules or using the solutions that the writers in the films come up with as models, students will be more interested in the questions the writers are asking and will understand that it is by asking such questions--by observing, by looking for patterns and connections, by being willing to look and to speculate again, and by knowing that there will be different solutions for every writing task--that they are able to write. Watching the films, students will inevitably come up with their own questions, and these questions will lead them to their own pieces of writing.

My answer to my friend's question, then, is that if these films about writing are effective it will be because they give students the experience of what it feels like to be a writer--the experience of generating chaos, of being confused, of discovering form as a way out of that chaos--and because they show them that writing is not so much a matter of mastering technical skills, but of engaging in an active process of inquiry. Teachers can help them have this experience in their own writing, perhaps by distributing reporters' notebooks at the beginning of the semester instead of rhetoric textbooks, certainly by encouraging them to work on some pieces of writing based on their own observations and speculations. They can further help them--and this is probably the teacher's most important role--by engaging them in conversations that are like the conversations about writing that take place in the films--conversations that are often hesitant, often tentative, sometimes even confused, but which are always conversations about meaning.

NOTES

1. The films in the series along with accompanying print materials are distributed by the Encyclopedia Brittanica. Telling an Old Story and Pieces of a Puzzle will be available early in 1985. For a free previewing, call 1-800-558-6968.

2. The Middletown Series, broadcast on PBS in 1982, is distributed by Films, Inc.

3. Knoblauch, C.H., and Lil Brannon. Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1984.

4. Berthoff, Ann E. Forming/Thinking/Writing. The Composing Imagination. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1978.

5. _____ Reclaiming the Imagination. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1984.

Richard Barsam

NONFICTION FILM AND/AS COMPOSITION

I am a teacher of film history, theory, and criticism, not a teacher of writing. It seems appropriate to confess and clarify my credentials, so that the professional teachers and authorities on composition who read this journal will overlook my presumption in invading their territory. Moreover, this essay is based not on systematic research, but on intermittent practice, not on one theory or another of how writing should be taught, but on the belief that in the approaches by which notification filmmakers look at the world, give it structure in their cameras and on their editing tables, and re-present it to the world, can be found materials for the continuing experiment that is the teaching of writing.

During the past seventeen years, the required writing of essays and other prose has remained constant in the syllabi of my courses in literature and film, and if I were asked to choose the one aspect of writing that I consider most difficult to teach, I would say structure. A major challenge of teaching students to write on any subject is that of encouraging them to choose a suitable design and hold to it (one of Strunk and White's elementary principles of composition).[1]

Those who agree with William Zinsser that "clutter is the disease of American writing"[2] may find, as I have, that the use of non-narrative cinematic structure in the teaching of composition can be an effective remedy in fighting that disease and in helping students to understand the need for an underlying order in the development of their thoughts. From a study of the structures of the nonfiction film, composition teacher and student alike can find numerous ways in which to approach the problem of giving shape to prose, reducing its clutter, enhancing its clarity, and achieving unity.

But why the nonfiction film? When the goal is to encourage students to become better writers, wouldn't the drama of the narrative cinema better stimulate and hold their interest? Perhaps, but as Lindsay Anderson has shown, the nonfiction film need not be synonymous with dullness,[3] and when

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the circumstances are favorable, it can both enliven the teaching and motivate the learning of writing. Moreover, many nonfiction films are especially appropriate today in the teaching of English because of their straightforward approaches to complex issues, concern with contemporary themes, general availability, relatively short running times, and low rental costs.

What is the Nonfiction Film?

Before considering more fully how these films can be useful in the teaching of writing, I would like to explain some of the theoretical foundations of the nonfiction film, and, in particular, my preference for the term nonfiction instead of documentary to define the genre. In 1959, when I began to study the nonfiction film, it was apparent that one of the most familiar terms in the film lexicon, documentary, was also one of the most abused and most misunderstood, having been applied to everything from newsreels and instructional films to travelogues, television reportage, and films about rock music festivals. The genre had been extended by filmmaking groups in different countries (first France, then the Soviet Union, then Great Britain, and finally the United States); by filmmakers as different as Auguste and Louis Lumiere, Dziga Vertov, Basil Wright, Pare Lorentz, Robert Flaherty, and Frank Capra; by theorists as diverse in their views as Vertov, John Grierson, and Joris Ivens; and by film historians and critics, such as Paul Rotha, Richard Griffith, and Richard Dyer MacCann, who brought equally individual viewpoints to their reading of this branch of cinema history.

By 1970, documentary was being used to classify films as different in conception, time of production, and achievement as Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North (1922), Luis Bunuel's Las Hurdes, (Land Without Bread) (1932), Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph des Willens (Triumph of the Will) (1936), Pare Lorentz's The Plow That Broke the Plains (1936), John Huston's The Battle of San Pietro (1945), Humphrey Jennings' A Diary for Timothy (1946), Jacques-Yves Cousteau's The Silent World (1956), Albert and David Maysles' Gimme Shelter (1970), and Frederick Wiseman's Welfare (1975). Since there was little consistency in the use of terminology, and even less in the definition of the genre, it seemed to me that nonfiction film would be a term more accurate, appropriate, and useful for identifying and defining this genre. The reasons for this have become clear to others, as well, who agree with me that John Grierson's term documentary signifies only one approach to the making of nonfiction film. All documentaries are nonfiction films, but not all nonfiction films are documentaries.[4]

This distinction notwithstanding, the nonfiction film continues to resist, almost to defy, definition. Some of the major achievements of this cinematic genre are hybrid creations, mixing the conventions of fiction and nonfiction with narrative and non-narrative devices. Each historian, theorist, or critic who has tried has confronted the same problems with nomenclature and definitions. Among the earliest definitions is John Grierson's seminal phrase--"the creative interpretation of actuality."[5] What has endured from this simple definition is the double emphasis on creativity and actuality, and what sets the major nonfiction film titles apart from others in cinema history is not so much their content, but their form, the degree to which the intelligence and creativity of their directors responds to the perceivable world.

Nonfiction film is the art of re-presentation, the art of recording and interpreting the world within a cinematic form that remains essentially true not only to the temporal and spatial aspects of that world, but also to what the filmmaker has perceived of it. It uses the highly formal properties of the cinematic medium to create a celluloid reality that comes as close as possible, within the limits of those properties, to the filmmaker's perception of the reality on which it is based. The nonfiction film attempts to record actual life as it is lived by real people, doing real things, and to help us to understand its complexities by showing us that even the most complex social issues arise out of the conflicting needs of individual human beings.

Fully acknowledging the absurdity of defining a "typical" nonfiction film (absurd because there cannot be any typical structure for perceived reality), I nonetheless have found, from my study of the history of the nonfiction film from the 1880s to the 1980s, that certain distinguishing characteristics often combine to constitute a "typical" product. It is, however, important to note that this "typical" product is now less influential than it once was, and that it results from a reading of history that has little to do with my own theoretical view or critical preferences. It has emerged as a type, and like most such models, this "typical" nonfiction film is constructed from a synthesis of many examples. The following catalogue of these distinguishing characteristics should be regarded in this context.

The nonfiction filmmaker has a personal vision and focuses his/her camera on actual (though sometimes simulated) situations--persons, processes, events--and attempts to render a creative interpretation of them. Traditionally, the nonfiction film originates in an immediate social situation: sometimes a problem, sometimes a crisis, sometimes an undramatic and seemingly unimportant person or event. It is usually filmed at the actual scene, with the actual people, without sets, costumes, written dialogue or created sound effects. It tries to create the feeling of "being there," with as much fidelity to fact as the situation allows. Typically, it is photographed in black and white, uses direct sound recoding (or simulated sound), a musical score written expressly for the film and conceived as part of a cinematic whole, and, often as not, spoken narration. Although the idea of a "typical" running time is also relative, the thirty minutes seems almost traditional, although some nonfiction films are shorter and some extend to the sixty- or ninety-minute format of feature films. However, since the 1960s, tradition being what it is, many of the characteristics listed here as typical of the nonfiction film have been challenged and rejected by the "direct cinema" filmmakers, whose work has demonstrated the continuing vitality and variety of the nonfiction film idea.[6] However, these identifying characteristics can be found in the largest number and in the most important achievements in nonfiction film history, at least until the 1960s, and many of them continue to characterize the film as well as television genre.

The best nonfiction films are best not because they are the most informative or the most persuasive or the most useful in treating social issues, but because they are the most creative, effective, and valuable human documents that can be made from the circumstances represented in them. Like the best in any art form, the nonfiction film is only as interesting and as human as the people who make it, as the people it represents, and as the people who see and respond to it. The nonfiction film deals with

reality--with real people and real situations--and it is in reality that we can locate the impulse behind it and account for our fascination with it.

Nonfiction Film and the Teaching of Writing

The relationship of the nonfiction film genre to the expository essay form is a close one. And that relationship exists, in part, because the creation of a nonfiction film--its conception, construction, composition--very much resembles the process of prose composition. The tools, of course, are very much more complicated, and the investment of time and money more extensive, but strong similarities nonetheless prevail. Because the notion of the nonfiction film suggests an approach to the process of filmmaking rather than any particular subject matter, it can take many forms. An examination of the various approaches taken by this genre to structuring and re-presenting reality will suggest ways in which it can be useful in the teaching of composition. What may be most attractive to the writing teacher is that many of these films can help students to choose a subject, to isolate aspects about which to write, and to select the appropriate structure for the assignment. Many nonfiction films follow the classic (even, "typical") pattern: introduction, exposition, conclusion. Some films, within that overall pattern, state a problem, explore various solutions, and express a definite preference for one solution over the others. Familiar too is the cinematic language by which those forms are developed and structured: exposition, comparison and contrast, description.

Because the use of film in a composition classroom may cause more problems that it solves, and raise questions other than those pertinent to the immediate work at hand, the writing teacher should not expect that the excitement of the film medium will necessarily interest students or stimulate them to write. The art of filmmaking is, like most arts, a process of selection and arrangement: visual and aural perception, and the editing of those perceptions into a cinematic whole. Happily, most students are more adaptable to experimentation than many teachers admit, and it will be more profitable here to proceed to an actual situation, rather than to debate the differences between different art forms. The only practical approach is for each individual teacher to experiment with the use of nonfiction film to determine if it will be effective in the classroom.

Consider a typical assignment in which students are asked to describe and explain a process in so many required words. For our purposes, let's agree that the subject is to be the student's full- or part-time job, a phenomenon familiar enough in today's college world. If they have selected their point-of-view and made a list of all the things they might say about this job, then their major challenges are to visualize the final essay and to choose a prose format that will bring them closest to that conception. Two British films can be helpful in providing visual illustrations of the structural process: Basil Wright's and Harry Watt's Night Mail (1936) and Lindsay Anderson's Every Day Except Christmas (1957). Both of them use a simple chronological structure, within which each reveals the complexities of a unique operation: the British postal service and the Covent Garden produce market, respectively. The work depicted is routine enough, but because each is about life and work in a foreign country, these films will not only open a student's cultural perspectives, but also provide sufficient distance from the

individual's own work experiences, widen attitudes toward work and provide a stimulus to examine them, and thus help to focus personal experience. Another effective use of the chronological structure (in this case, the seasons of the year and the generations of family life), Georges Rouquier's Farrebique (1946) suggests rich possibilities for student writing on the subject of their own families, as does Humphrey Jennings' A Diary for Timothy (1946). Equally important, these films and others can suggest that the work of the writer, as the work of the filmmaker, is to create structure: to observe, to interpret, to rearrange, to edit, and, finally, to set that down on paper within some reasonable approximation of grammatical rules and principles.

As Peter Harcourt has observed:

> As teachers, we can probably no longer determine the priorities of our students, much as at times we might wish to. But we can attempt to provide them with experiences of the fields that seem to interest them. In the case of film, we can attempt to lead them from the familiar to the unfamiliar and thus to suggest that there is both depth and variety in this popular art, and relevance as well.

In the writing classroom, nonfiction film can effectively open different cultural and personal perspectives, provide subjects or suggestions for assignments in exposition or description, and exemplify solid structure and clear development. Some titles to consider are: George Stoney's All My Babies (1942), about the training of black midwives in Georgia; and three films about handicapped children--Fred Zinnemann's Benjy (1951), Guy Brenton's and Lindsay Anderson's Thursday's Children (1953), and Sidney Meyers', Janice Loeb's and Helen Levitt's The Quiet One (1949). These three films could serve further as the basis for a comparison and contrast assignment. Two excellent films on foreign cultures that will stimulate classroom discussion and provide subjects for writing are Robert Gardner's Dead Birds (1963) and Rivers of Sand (1974).

The problem/solution pattern, a familiar one in nonfiction film, provides a good structural model for writing. A simple, short film example of the cinematic structuring of a complex process, John Grierson's and Harry Watt's Line to the Tschierva Hut (1937), is a model of subtle conception and straightforward explanation, using the problem/solution pattern. Richer cinematically is Joris Ivens' Power and the Land (1940), a lovely, lyrical film using the before/after pattern. Another popular and stimulating film that utilizes this same pattern to treat the always lively issue of urban planning is Willard Van Dyke's and Ralph Steiner's The City (1939). The "direct cinema" technique avoids the problem/solution pattern in favor of a more balanced, ambiguous re-presentation of actuality. Its technique develops the theory and practice of the nonfiction film to its most fully realized form. Because the subject is developed without narration, thus requiring the viewer to perceive and to process a great deal more information than in the more typical nonfiction film, films in the direct cinema mode may be a challenge more suitable for advanced rather than introductory assignments. Nonetheless, they should be part of any experiment in using the nonfiction film in the writing classroom. With the exception of the uncharacteristic Titicut Follies (1967), most of Frederick Wiseman's films fascinate students

with their detached observation and complex structure. To list but two of them: Basic Training (1971) is a detailed account of the training of Army recruits, and thus serves as a model for the chronological, sequential development of a process; Law and Order (1969), provides a thorough account of police work in an urban community, and suggests many possibilities for essay topics, as well as for a discussion on bias and advocacy in nonfiction film.

The nonfiction film has demonstrated, in many memorable examples, its power to unite the social consciousness with the creative intellect of the filmmaker in a treatment of issues of moral or social concern. Among the many films that are useful for the classroom stimulation of writing subjects and structures are: The Chair (1962), a film about capital punishment by George Shuker, Richard Leacock, and D.A. Pennebaker; Attica (1973), Cinda Firestone's committed and moving film about prison conditions; Cathy Come Home (1969), Ken Loach's hybrid fiction/nonfiction film about the homeless in England in the 1960s that remains poignant and particularly relevant today; and George Stoney's You are on Indian Land (1970), a film about Canada's Indians that, like the Loach film, is very close to home. Still others concern labor unions--Barbara Kopple's Harlan County, USA (1976); working women--Julia Reichert's and James Klein's Union Maids (1977); Southern blacks--Douglas Leiterman's One More River (1964); the black middle class--Leiterman's From Harlem to Sugar Hill (1968); and some of the significant factors that influence young men growing up in America--Will Roberts' Men's Lives (1974).

War, peace, hunger, the Holocaust, nuclear annihilation--these have all been the subjects of nonfiction films. The study of such films should be a part of any liberal education, and they also have the value in the writing classroom of stimulating debate, of helping students to an understanding of these complex issues, and of encouraging them to find a way for expressing their own viewpoints. The writing teacher is fortunate in having a great many titles from which to choose; among them are Peter Watkins' The War Game (1966),[10] and Fred W. Friendly's Harvest of Shame (1960). Discussions of the Holocaust will be enriched for most students by a screening of Alain Resnais' Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog) (1955).[11] Despite all the television footage, there were very few outstanding nonfiction films concerning the war in Vietnam, but those deserving further attention include Joseph Strick's Interviews with My Lai Veterans (1970), Peter Watkins' Culloden (1969), and Eugene S. Jones' A Face of War (1968).

Summing Up

The nonfiction film has an unrivalled power to communicate information, as well as an unparalleled power to persuade, and its relationship to the expository essay form makes it ideal for use in the writing classroom. So much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing and hearing, and this most flexible of all film genres helps to demonstrate not only how rich is the variety of human experience, but also how many are the approaches that can be taken in expressing it. In the teaching of prose composition, it is worthwhile to examine the various structures of the nonfiction film to determine how they achieve clarity, coherence, and meaning, and thus how they might help students to achieve the same qualities in their writing. Moreover, the nonfiction film shares with all film the power to overwhelm us, to excite

us, to explore life as it is actually lived, and to open new personal and cultural perspectives. That, too, has value in the teaching of writing.

NOTES

1. Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White, The Elements of Style, (New York, Macmillan Co., 1972), p. 10.

2. On Writing Well (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 6.

3. "Free Cinema," in Nonfiction Film Theory and Criticism, ed. Richard Meran Barsam (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1976), pp. 70-74.

4. I readily acknowledge that the definition of any art form can be a hazardous and meaningless task. Those wishing to pursue some of the thinking behind my definition may wish to consult Chapter 1 in my Nonfiction Film: A Critical History (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973) as well as my "Nonfiction Film: The Realist Impulse" in Film Theory and Criticism, 2nd ed., eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 580-93. Consult also Paul Rotha, Documentary Film (New York: Hastings House, 1952) and Erik Barnouw, Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

5. See John Grierson, Grierson on Documentary, ed. H. Forsyth Hardy (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947).

6. An historical anthology of critical writing on the genre is The Documentary Tradition: From Nanook to Woodstock, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Hopkinson & Blake, 1980); see also G. Roy Levin, Documentary Explorations: Fifteen Interviews with Film-Makers (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971); Quarterly Review of Film Studies, ed. Richard Barsam (Winter 1982); and Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier, Studies in Documentary (New York: Viking Press, 1972).

7. See A. William Bluem, Documentary in American Television (New York: Hastings House, 1965).

8. Critical synopses of many of the films discussed here will be found in my Nonfiction Film: A Critical History (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973); see also two books by Alan Rosenthal, The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) and The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

9. "The Study of Films as a University Discipline: An Approach to the Art of Alain Resnais" in The Uses of Film In the Teaching of English (Ontario, Canada: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971), p. 123.

10. See Alan C. Coman, "The War Game: That Old Documentary Bugaboo" in The Uses of Film in the Teaching of English (Ontario, Canada: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971), pp. 151-160.

11. For a good discussion of teaching this and other of Resnais' nonfiction films, see Harcourt, "The Study of Film as a University Discipline: An Approach to the Art of Alain Resnais."

Frank Haase

USING A BIOLOGY FILM IN A BASIC WRITING CLASS

I was leaving the Biology Department when I was spotted by one of my students from English 01. "Dr. Haase," she shouted with a sense of discovery, "Do you teach biology too?" With a sense of deja vu behind my smile, I replied, "Yes Marie, I am a biologist, and I've had special training to teach basic writing."

After our conversation, I reflected on the benefits of academic cross-fertilization. Since it is difficult to write, let alone think, about the unknown, I had often supplied vicarious experience in biology courses with films and other media. I'd already accustomed my biology students to writing essays; perhaps transplanting a little of this expertise into my English class would stimulate some growth.

Yvette gave me the opportunity I wanted. She was young, popular, and expecting the birth of her first child. Her progress was followed with interest by many of her classmates. Simply raising the prospect of seeing a film on childbirth brought an enthusiastic response. Don Canty, Director of Audiovisual Services at Bronx Community College, helped me to select an appropriate film, Birth Without Violence: Gentle Birth (1975).

I began our next class with a brief outline drawn from my knowledge of biology and from personal experiences with natural childbirth. At this point, directions were limited to asking the class to observe and to raise questions about what they saw. After the showing, we discussed our impressions. Some of the questions had to do with the making of the film. One student wanted to know why the birth of a white child was the subject of the film. In answering this question, I was able to connect biological facts with the techniques of photography.

I pointed out that the fetus does not grow in strong light, nor in utter darkness, but in a dim, ruddy glow diffusing through its mother's skin. Since emerging into the glare of floodlights would be painful, the lighting of the delivery room was subdued. This concern for the welfare of the newborn dictated the choice of film stock and the choice of "actors." Black-and-white film was selected for its sensitivity; color film requires more intense light for proper exposure. Since pale skin reflects more light than dark, and the

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image on film is formed by the light reflected by the object, the photographing of the newborn in a darkened room was governed by a combination of humane and technical considerations.

At this stage, we discussed various considerations that govern the writing of a motion picture. I noted that a film usually has its origin in a script. Scenes are first developed in writing before they become images on the screen. Both the filmmaker and the writer are concerned with continuity and organization. The students were asked to imagine themselves the producers of a film on childbirth. They were asked to respond in writing to the question, "If your job is writing a film on childbirth, what will you put into your script?"

Most of the students approached the assignment with a mixture of facts and imagination. Many occupied themselves with a straightforward account of the events they considered worth recording. In some cases, opening and closing scenes were indicated. Often, particular aspects of pregnancy, labor, and delivery were singled out for special attention.

While most students emphasized childbirth as an important human experience for both parents, one student made the father the dramatic focus of his story, including dialogue with the doctor and the father's unvoiced thoughts.

A few of the papers were addressed not to birth, but to associated concerns. Among these were the burdens and pains of pregnancy, the desirability of contraception, and the use of films as a means of disseminating information. Apparently, the assignment was flexible enough to allow the writers to voice their personal concerns.

While the focus varied from author to author, there was generally a concerted effort to organize the written material so that the resulting films would have continuity. There also seemed to be a certain pleasure in one's own inventiveness, as the content and format were of the writer's devising. Interestingly, none of the writers was content to reiterate what had been seen in Birth Without Violence. The fact that the film served as a point of departure indicates that its main effect was to stimulate interest and response. Several students made it quite clear that their productions would be more inclusive than the original.

These papers were treated as a first draft to be edited. After revising the grammar, we proceeded to develop paragraphs (scenes). Most of the students sustained interest through this phase of the work, seeing it as the finishing touch to their creativity.

The experiment was successful in stimulating writing and rewriting. This was particularly satisfying, because the process had been evocative rather than didactic. For some students, there was the pleasurable assumption of status as the producers and purveyors of information. For all, there was a measure of reassurance that their thought processes were orderly and inventive even if their grammatical prowess was less consistent.

Laraine Fergenson

A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT AND A NEW SLANT ON BASIC WRITING

It is all too common for instructors of basic writing to meet young men and women in their twenties, or older students returning to their education after a hiatus of many years, who do not have even a nodding acquaintance with writers who are considered part of our common cultural heritage--Henry David Thoreau, George Orwell, Emily Dickinson, just to name a few. And yet teachers of basic writing often do not use the opportunity they have to present their students with a selection of high-quality literature. The failure to meet some of the important intellectual needs of basic writing students may be accompanied by the best of intentions.

Insufficient time and student readiness are the two main obstacles that basic writing teachers perceive. How can one present classic literature to students who may be reading at a sixth-grade level or below? And how can an instructor take the time for literature when students, who lack the most basic knowledge of standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation, must prepare in all too short a time for a strictly graded final examination such as the CUNY Writing Assessment Test, which guards the gates to college-level courses and thus to the continuation of a student's higher education?

As to the question of preparedness, many basic writers actually read far better than they write, and even those who test on a grade-school reading level need mature reading content. Moreover, mature content need not be difficult. Many works of classic literature are comprehensible to students in basic writing classes, especially if they are presented with a good apparatus of study questions and vocabulary-word definitions. And, of course, film can be a great teaching aid, providing clarification and reinforcement, and generally enhancing students' interest and enjoyment in the work or works being discussed.

The more difficult problem facing the basic writing teacher who wants to introduce literature and film into the class is the shortage of time, given the pressing needs of the students. Should students, therefore, spend time discussing literature and viewing films? Would it not be better for them to spend every available minute of class time on the basics of writing that they have hitherto missed but now must learn?

But perhaps we should be asking whether literature and film--intellectual content--are luxuries or necessities. Perhaps we should ask whether basic writing classes can afford not to spend time on content.

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Far too often basic writing classes dwell too much on the correction of errors rather than on the creation of ideas, which are the basis of any good essay. Students taking the CUNY Writing Assessment Test are instructed to develop their essays with ideas drawn from their own experience, their observations of others, or their reading; but all too often the developmental courses students who have failed the exam must take do not allow time for them to consider and discuss any new ideas. Courses dwelling only on the mechanics of writing set up a kind of closed system, in which new ideas are not nurtured. Students are too often limited, for their own good it is thought, to the immediate task at hand. Jeffrey Youdelman, in an essay titled "Limiting Students: Remedial Writing and the Death of Open Admissions" (College English , Vol. 39, No. 5 [Jan. 1978]), points out that students in basic writing classes are discouraged from discussing abstract ideas. He writes: "Already stuck in a world of daily detail, with limited horizons and stunted consciousnesses, students are forced deeper into their solipsistic prisons" (p. 564). Although Youdelman's description certainly does not fit all basic writing students, it does, unfortunately, fit too many and strongly argues the case for allowing basic writing students a broader range.

Providing our basic writing students with stimulating intellectual content is essential, and it amply justifies the classroom time involved. Since such teaching motivates students and provides a needed break from basic skills instruction and drill, it can actually save time by making other work periods more productive. Moreover, providing students with intellectual stimulation should be considered an end in itself. My experiences with three sections of basic writing at Bronx Community College in the fall of 1983 illustrate these views.

II

At the 1977 MLA Convention in Chicago, I saw a strikingly beautiful film, Emily Dickinson: A Certain Slant of Light (1977) produced by Jean Mudge and Bayley Silleck for Pyramid Films. Narrated by Julie Harris, the film describes the life and work of the shy, retiring poet of Amherst, Massachusetts. On my return to Bronx Community College, I recommended to our Audiovisual Services that the film be purchased. At that time I was not considering the film for basic writing classes, but rather for students enrolled in our literature courses, a kind of reward reserved for those who had persisted and mastered basic grammar. But as I came to see the importance of thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating experiences for basic writing students, I decided to show the film to those students as well. It was a perfect complement to a poem by Emily Dickinson--"I'm nobody! Who are you?"--which the students were reading, discussing, and writing about.

After a brief introduction to the poet and her work, the students were assigned to reread the poem for homework and complete an exercise based on its vocabulary. At the next class meeting, I showed the film, A Certain Slant of Light, which focuses on the house in Amherst where Emily Dickinson spent most of her life. Julie Harris reads several of the poems and excerpts from some of Dickinson's letters, telling the story of the existence that was so outwardly uneventful and so inwardly dramatic. After the showing, the students were very curious to learn even more about the poet's life. They themselves made the connection between her retiring personality and the poem they had read. We discussed introversion versus extroversion, the

relationship between the individual and society, and the paradox that this shy, obscure woman, who had published only seven poems during her lifetime, became a world-famous poet after her death.

At the end of the week, I asked students in two of my three sections to write an evaluation of the film and its use in a writing class. I asked the following questions: Did you enjoy the film? Did you learn something important from it? Did it help you to improve your writing? Was it worth the time it took, or would the time have been better spent on grammar or punctuation? Do you recommend that I show the film to future basic writing classes?

Directing the students to answer as many of these questions as they could, I told them that their answers would not be marked or influence their grade in any way, but that they might influence my future teaching. So that they would feel free to express their feelings, whether positive or negative, I told them that they did not have to sign their names.

Of the thirty-seven students who wrote evaluations, twenty-eight were definitely positive, five were against the use of the film in future writing classes (though not necessarily negative about the film itself), and four were neutral. Twenty-five of the students chose to sign their names, including two of the students who recommended that I not show the film again.

I found the students' evaluations fascinating. Although their answers show my students' writing difficulties, the ideas they express concerning the film as a learning experience are remarkably sophisticated. One student wrote:

> I think that seeing the film, "A Certain Slant of Light," was very interesting. The film we saw about Emily Dickinson, was very good. It gave us a lot of information about Emily Dickinson's life. I think we should see more films, because it gives us positive ideas and thoughts about writing.

Another wrote: "I think that it's good for us to learn about famous writers. This film encouraged me."

One student made a significant comment about the ability of a film to provide a break from the necessary grammar drill. She said it made the class enjoyable and interesting. This student, like many others, revealed that she had not previously heard of Emily Dickinson, and she commented on the importance of learning about a major American poet. For some of the students, seeing the film seems to have been an emotional as well as an intellectual experience, as in the case of the student who wrote, "I found out that she wrote with feelings. I like her poems very much. The best of all was that she wrote her poems from deep inside."

Of the five students who did not think that the film should be shown to future basic writing classes, most had practical objections, concentrating on the problem I had suggested in asking if the time used to show it could have been better spent on teaching the mechanics of writing. The students' comments, written about five weeks into the semester, forced me to consider the question of the uses of class time. Even if students find the experience

of seeing a film enjoyable, intellectually stimulating, and moving, will that really teach them to write better?

In considering the goals of a basic writing class, we have to distinguish between the pragmatic and the ideal, between our immediate and long-term aims; but sometimes we have to realize that in reaching for the long-term and the ideal, we can better attain our short-term and pragmatic goals. If we decide that our goal is not merely to prepare students to pass a specific test by teaching them standard grammar and the conventions of writing, but, in addition, to awaken in them a sensitivity to literature and a taste for intellectual experience, not only will we be working toward fulfilling our higher goals, but we will have better success with our immediate goals as well. Even the student who wrote, "I would have rather had a lesson on grammar" concluded by saying "...after thinking about it for a while, I do find a relationship between the poem and the film." Thus, the film had induced the student to think, make connections, and find a relationship between things--skills that are crucial in producing a well-developed and organized essay.

The twenty-eight students who unequivocally enjoyed the film and recommended showing it to future classes often revealed the motivating and stimulating effect of material, whether literature, film, or a combination of both, that shows respect for their minds. As one student wrote,

> "A Certain Slant of Light" is a movie I wouldn't mind seeing over again for the second time; It influenced me into writing more than I did before, and gradually, I feel that I'm getting better.

If such motivation leads to increased concentration, then, as noted previously, the use of film may hasten the process of improving students' writing skills.

Interestingly, one of the most meaningful comments on the film came from a student in the section that was not asked to write an evaluation. The student came up to my desk one morning before class and showed me a book she had just bought--a beautiful edition of The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson. She told me that she had never heard of the poet before but had purchased the book after seeing the film and discussing the poem in class. In my experience, it is rather unusual for a student in basic writing to buy the collected poems of Emily Dickinson, and it was wonderful to think that this new interest grew directly out of the class experience. Seeing the enthusiasm in my student's face that morning as she showed me the book is one of my best memories of the semester. It was one of those moments when a teacher knows that despite the hurried and harried pace of teaching multiple sections of basic writing, what we do in our classes can make a difference--perhaps a lasting difference--in the lives of our students.

Thus, instructors of basic writing should find the time for literature and film in their classes. Not only can such intellectual experiences actually motivate students to master the grammar and writing conventions that are a major part of the course content; not only can such experiences stimulate students to reason, to create and associate ideas, and thus to become better writers; but, above all, such intellectual experiences have

intrinsic value. The problem with waiting until the students are "ready" is that they have been waiting too long as it is. The notion that the students in basic writing classes are not yet at a stage when they can benefit from good literature and content films is a self-fulfilling prophecy that perpetually prolongs the waiting period. To cite the philosopher Hillel, "If not now, when?"

Leo Lieberman

NIGHT AND FOG: A FILM TO STIMULATE THOUGHT AND PROMOTE WRITING

Every semester students in my basic writing class complain that the reason they are poor writers is that they have nothing they want to communicate. Somehow I feel that it is up to me to do something that will make each student want to write, make the student need to get across an idea, supply the Wordsworthian key to "unlock his heart."

And so it came. Night and Fog (1962), a film narrated in French with English subtitles, was exactly the key. In this film there is depicted graphically and earnestly in vivid detail the incredible theme of Hitler's "final solution." With the use of actual photographs and film clips we are shown some of the scenes of the concentration camps: the ovens, the experiments on men and women in the interest of science, the mass graves, the numbers, the sheer anonymity of numbers--nine million men, women, children, all deemed the "undesirables."

The film is accompanied by a fine musical score, at once nostalgic and plaintive, touching the high register of memory and emotion. Before showing my class this film which lasts half an hour, I read aloud without comment several of Nellie Sachs' poems. The words painted the pictures:

> World, why have you taken our soft mothers from us
> And the fathers who say: My child, you are like me!
> We orphans are like no one in the world any more!
> O world
> We accuse you!
>
> -"Chorus of the Orphans"

> O the night of the weeping children!
> O the night of the children branded for death!
> Sleep may not enter here.
> Terrible nursemaids
> Have usurpsed the place of mothers...
>
> -"O Night of the Weeping Children"

And then the film. The narrator's voice is clear and precise. And although he speaks in French, a language not understood by most of the students, his tone and voice quality provide an almost musical accompaniment to the

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translation at the bottom of the screen. I observed my students. They focused on the screen, reading each word, watching the smoke rise above the cemetery ovens of the concentration camps. They observed with something more than horror and certainly akin to revulsion the blank looks of the Kapo and the prison guard as more than a million children--a number that defies the imagination--were taken away from their parents and sent, herded in the death trains, the lonely victims of no crime, to the cremation of Auschwitz and Treblinka, to the mass graves of Eastern Europe.

I could hear the students' breathing as they heard the Nazi butchers at Nuremberg call out, "I am not responsible," one after another. At the end of the film, no one moved. A minute passed--perhaps not quite--and then I handed the students a duplicated sheet with selections from Lucy Davidowicz, James Baldwin, and Anne Frank. On the chalkboard, I wrote, "Oh world/We accuse you!"

"Let that be your title," I said, and I gave the students their papers. No one complained that he had nothing to say, no one said he was tired of the same old topic, no student yawned. Pencils moved, pens touched paper, and words spewed forth:

> I accuse the world and everyone for not taking action. We are all to blame when such a tragedy takes place. The film made me realize for the first time that the Holocaust is not just a "Jewish problem"--it is everyone's concern. Therefore, I accuse myself.
>
> Until I saw this film, I used to say that Jewish people were too much concerned about the Holocaust and what took place during the time the nazis were in power and that they were not concerned enough about other people. Now I feel so different. Perhaps it is that we are like the people in the film who said, "I am not responsible." Jews and we were not directly affected. We <u>are</u> responsible. We are our brothers' keeper. If we do not speak out against injustice and cruelty then when they "come for us in the evening" no one will be left to stand with us.

A climate for writing had been developed through the use of a film, creating a need for expression, for communicating ideas. Students said that they wished they could be more eloquent. They wanted to affect others because they had been affected.

The mind once stretched cannot revert to its original size. That day a film was shown and minds were stretched. I used a film and a book of verse to achieve this result and students discovered that through their own writing they can influence others and provide self-purgation. And I saw once again that whenever our class becomes a dynamic, creative experience, then not only the students are the beneficiaries.

Thelma Schenkel

EXPERIMENTING WITH INNOVATIVE SHORT FILMS IN COMPOSITION CLASSES

I have long been in love with the short film, long felt that it lends itself to a high level of risk-taking and innovation, and that it is among the most exciting realms of cinema. One can take chances, try new approaches, test out unknown waters in the short film without having to chart a course that provides a safe journey across ninety minutes. In a five- or ten-minute film, one can explore whatever one can imagine. In short, one can play. It is precisely this willingness to let go and play a little, to set sail in uncharted waters, as it were, that needs encouragement in our composition students. What better medium to inspire this freedom to play than the short film, which to a great extent is itself characterized by the spirit of play?

In the course of fourteen years of teaching film and English at Baruch College, I have become convinced of the critical importance of conveying to my composition students the excitement I feel about the visual arts, about the power of expressing thought and feeling through the visual image and metaphor. I also believe that in general one should encourage one's students to relate their studies to other aspects of their lives. Life is surely an interdisciplinary enterprise, and therefore I like to expose my students to assignments which encourage them to break through conventional perspectives and to make connections across boundaries, whether of subject matter, methodology, or medium. It is for these reasons as well that I include in my composition classes a number of innovative short films. In this paper I will describe one sequence of assignments which students and I have found stimulating and which I found rewarding to teach. It will, I hope, also suggest the limitless uses of the short film in teaching composition. I have used this sequence in the last semester of required composition, but I see no reason why it could not be adapted for use at lower levels of proficiency.

Reading 1984

The first part of this multi-leveled project consists of studying George Orwell's 1984. We discuss the novel from many points of view, examining characterization and plot, while concentrating on the themes and the current relevance of Orwell's vision. Some very exciting discussions develop as students, many of them newly arrived in this country, share personal experiences which they have come to see in a new perspective as a result of reading the novel. For one student, it was growing up as a member of the Pioneer Youth in Castro's Cuba that took on new meaning; for another, it was living under Nkrumah in Ghana; for a third, in the U.S. from the Soviet Union

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less than a year, it was the stories he had heard about life under Stalin that were seen in a new light. The American-born students are dumbstruck, having assumed that since 1984 is "just fiction," Orwell is surely exaggerating for effect. They bring in some of their own experiences, such as "being forced" to go to Catholic school in the Bronx, which may seem trivial when compared to some of the foreign-born students' stories, but are hardly minor events in the lives of the individuals who experience them. This leads to discussing the importance of point of view, to examining the distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity, and to realizing the necessity of experiencing another person's perspective from within that person's cultural context.

Essay on 1984

After the classroom discussion which is generally stimulating, I assign an essay asking students to relate some aspect of 1984 to an aspect of their personal or professional lives. It is to be 750-1000 words in length and is to be done at home. I specifically ask them to avoid generalities and platitudes about "modern life," to focus instead on the meaning of the book in personal terms, and to present their analysis of the connections as cogently as possible.

Screening of No. 00173

With very little introductory comment, I then screen the short color film No. 00173, (1966) directed by Jan Habarta. Prior to the screening, I avoid mentioning that the film was made in Poland, so as not to prejudice the students' responses or to prevent their seeing a universal level of meaning in it. The film depicts a horrifying vision of the future in which an assembly-line of automatons rhythmically bow down to a row of machines, which seem to be producing nothing. A butterfly appears, perhaps from within the machine, and one of the workers becomes entranced by it, doffing her protective helmet in order to kiss it and play with it. Her fellow-worker, seeing that it is on the verge of being crushed within the claw-like grip of the machine, risks stopping work and possibly losing an arm or even his life in order to save this vital, brightly colored creature--the only apparent source of joy in an otherwise lifeless world. The chief robot begins a countdown alarm, the butterfly is saved in time, and the workers resume their robotized motions as before. Suddenly the chief robot approaches the butterfly, spears it with a needle, and takes it into the next room to mount it on the wall. As its color drains, the last image of the film reveals that this specimen is in fact "Number 00173" in the chief robot's butterfly collection.

In opening the discussion of this powerful, enigmatic film, I find it useful to begin by simply asking the students to describe what happened--not what it means, but simply the factual evidence of the film. In the process of doing so, they become aware once again of the important distinctions between fact and opinion, between specific bits of evidence and general interpretations of those specifics. They become aware that in presenting an argument in favor of a particular viewing of the film, they need to marshall specific facts, evidence that is uncontestable and verifiable, before they can begin to develop arguments which organize that evidence persuasively.

In discussing this film, the temptation is great to plunge immediately into an interpretation of "what it all means." I find it useful, however, to

channel that tension into sharpening the students' awareness that description and interpretation are very different activities which call upon different skills, but that ultimately in a persuasive analysis, both processes need to be engaged.

As we discuss the dramatic evidence of the film, I continually draw the students' attention to the visual and aural evidence that is, in effect, the film. I try showing the film twice if possible making a special effort to introduce specific cinematic terms into the discussion so that they can acquire the vocabulary to describe formal aspects of film precisely. For example, I have found such terms as "live action," "cameraless animation" (painting directly onto the film), and "asynchronous sound" useful. (For a useful glossary of film terms, see Frank Beaver's Dictionary of Film Terms [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983].) At the same time I demonstrate the extent to which film form shapes and determines the viewer's emotional responses. For example, I ask students to describe the quality of the sound prior to, during, and after the butterfly's appearance and to speculate on the impact of the butterfly's presence on the characters as it is reflected in the sound changes. I then ask them to describe the quality of the people's movements and to note how fundamentally different these mechanical, angular movements are from the curvilinear sweeps of the butterfly. I ask them what they have noticed about the use of color and texture in the film, pointing out the vibrancy of the hand-painted butterfly--whose red-orange brush-strokes at times fill the entire frame and whose vitality contrasts starkly with the monochromatic metallic tones of the people on the assembly-line--and indicating that color plays a significant role in influencing the viewer's responses to the people and to the butterfly.

Once the students have gathered a certain amount of filmic evidence and become sensitized to the difficulty of separating form and content, I then pose questions which require interpretation and speculation. By then, as a class, they have amassed a great deal of "evidence" upon which arguments can be built. In this discussion of meaning, the ground rule is straightforward: Support your interpretation with as much coherent, logically-ordered evidence as you can provide. In the students' responses to my questions in class, they begin to formulate their interpretation of what the film means. As they are testing out their hypotheses, comparing them with their classmates' viewpoints, and honing their own arguments in the process, it is important that the questions be stimulating, surprising, and even take the role of devil's advocate at times. Among the questions I ask are the following: Where does the butterfly come from? What is the purpose of the machines? What are the people doing? What function does this "factory" serve? Are the machines needed for the butterfly to emerge? What role does the robot play in the generation of the butterfly? All of the questions lead into the central question: What does the butterfly represent? To add a further dimension to their consideration of that question, I introduce several questions which require speculation beyond the temporal confines of the film: Will butterflies continue to appear? Will people continue to react the way those in the film did? What will happen two generations into the future? Five? Ten? Will the emotions that are so evident in the faces and gestures of the people who acted to save the butterfly still exist in the people of the future? In addition to broadening the context of students' thinking about the film, these speculative questions provide material which could be incorporated into the conclusion of the essay which I then assign.

Essay on No. 00173 and 1984

The students are then given an in-class writing assignment in which they have 1 hour 40 minutes to write a 500-750 word essay on the following question: Are the visions of the future depicted in No. 00173 and 1984 optimistic or pessimistic? The students may use their notes, but are specifically asked not to rehash what was said in class. Whatever approach the writers decide to take, they have to focus, interpret, and synthesize the evidence in such a way that a persuasive case is made for their points of view. Ultimately, the question requires students to think for themselves. This kind of assignment presupposes that the students have had basic preparation in writing analytical, comparative, and persuasive essays and is designed to build on those skills. Insofar as the gathering of evidence is concerned, this assignment provides an opportunity for students to become aware of the fact that regardless of the nature of the evidence, the process of marshalling evidence into a coherent structure is the same. Cinematic evidence is described in terms which are different from those used to describe literature. However, in both cases, the evidence has to be specific, concrete, clear, and ordered in a way that is logical, coherent, and persuasive.

Screening of Time Piece

The next short film I screen is Time Piece (1965) directed by and starring Jim Henson, the creator of The Muppets. It is a surrealistic collage of the thoughts, wishes, fears, and fantasies of a middle-class, middle-aged man who seems to be on his deathbed and reviews his entire life, much as a drowning man supposedly sees his whole life flash before him in an instant. He feels bored and helpless in his marriage, useless at his job; his leisure is filled with meaningless, joyless activities. He cannot even manage an effective escape in his fantasy life; rather, he is continually being brought "down to earth" by his wife.

The collage techniques of the film can be difficult to comprehend, and the logic of the narrative difficult to follow; therefore, before I show the film I point out that the way the film combines perceptions, memories, wishes, and fantasies, the way it flows from present to past and back and forth again--without indicating which is which--is akin to our everyday experience of our consciousness. The principle of visual association, linking images through formal, visual connections as we often do in dreams, is mentioned. Finally, I suggest that in a sense, the film's narrative is a cinematic equivalent of Joyce's "stream of consciousness," and that Time Piece is an excellent example of the great potential of film to depict multiple levels of reality, to present fantasy and fact, as though they were all equally real.

After screening the film, I ask the students if they remember any words used in it. They recall only one--"Help!"--cried out on four occasions: after a day at work, when a jack-in-the-box pops up with the protagonist's face on a dollar bill at the end of a spring; at an expensive restaurant where his head served on a platter is the main course; when he is trying to escape from the authorities by flying away after breaking out of prison where he had been sent for shooting his wife's version of the "Mona Lisa"; and when a woman in a pink dress (his wife, the "pink lady"?) flushes him down the toilet at the end. Noticing the use of "Help!" as a punctuation mark throughout the

work leads directly into a discussion of the themes of the film. Throughout this discussion, I remind the group that the entire film takes place within the protagonist's mind. If his wife seems to be the cause of his repressions and frustrations, if his job seems to be a source of boredom and frustration, it is because he sees them as such. Once again, we discuss the distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity and explore whether the dividing line between them is in fact as clear as it may sometimes seem.

It is interesting to note at which points in the discussion of Time Piece students make reference to No. 00173. Despite the very great differences between the worlds depicted in these films, the problems seem related: monotony, lifelessness, boredom. Inevitably, the students will refer to 1984 and begin to make connections among all three works. This process is particularly exciting when it is generated by the students themselves, manifesting as it does a growing awareness that similar themes and preoccupations can be treated through very different media, in very different styles, and that these multiple perspectives can be mutually illuminating. Using these comments as a point of departure, I encourage the students to consider the many possible thematic connections among the works.

Among the broad questions raised by 1984 which are also relevant to No. 00173 and, in a totally different context, could also be asked in relation to Time Piece, are the following: To what extent does the environment one is brought up in shape one's identity and one's perception of the world? Does social pressure effectively enforce conformity? Can one speak of the individual's responsibility in a totalitarian society? To what extent can individuality be obliterated? Does one have the right to judge another, when he is unwilling to give up his life for what he claims to believe? To what extent can one speak of "human nature" in the context of these works? Of "the human spirit"? Of "the soul"?

The possible questions are endless. What is important to stress is that these works of art take place in very different contexts. The pressure to capitulate through terror in 1984 is not tantamount to the pressure to conform to the middle-class values of suburbia in the 1960s. Yet the novel and the films share basic, universal concerns and raise similar, important questions. It is in the process of discovering these that students become aware that making cross-cultural, cross-media comparisons can be a fruitful and illuminating approach to apparently dissimilar works of art.

Final Writing Assignment

I ask the students to choose from a list of questions which focus on the two films and to incorporate references to 1984 in their essays when relevant. These references might be particularly useful in the introduction and conclusion, which I have been encouraging the students to view as serving to establish a broad context within which to frame the ideas in the body of the essay. This essay is also a 1 hour 40 minute in-class assignment, 500-750 words in length; the students can refer to their notes. Once again, I remind them not to repeat class discussion, indicating that the notes should rather serve as points of departure for their own syntheses of the three works. Among the topics they may choose to discuss are the following:

1) No. 00173 and Time Piece are films in which freedom and its absence are the central concerns. Compare the depictions of freedom and imprisonment in the two films, referring to 1984 to illuminate your analysis.

2) What purpose(s) does the factory serve in No. 00173 and what, if anything, does it share with the workplace depicted in Time Piece?

3) Examine the people's reactions to the butterfly in No. 00173 and compare them to the protagonist's responses to his plight in Time Piece.

4) If the protagonist's wife in Time Piece made a film about her life, what additional light would it shed on their relationship? Analyze the problems in their marriage, while speculating on her point of view.

5) Is there anything the protagonist of Time Piece could learn from the male and female protagonists in No. 00173?

Conclusions

I am convinced that students benefit in several ways from discussing and writing about innovative short films in their composition classes. The series of assignments I have suggested help students to develop the capacity to analyze and synthesize complex material and to argue cogently in favor of their interpretation of it. In addition, by stimulating analogical thinking, these assignments draw on a wider range of the students' faculties than are usually brought into play in the writing classroom. Moreover, as students are viewing and discussing the films, as well as writing about them, they are becoming sensitive to a new medium of expression, a form of film whose existence most of them had been unaware of until then. Further, in drawing connections among the works and in exploring the relevance of works of art from diverse cultures to their own lives, they are learning that art can be meaningful to them and that it can provide tools and insights which enable them to examine their lives and experience value and meaning in ways they might not have experienced otherwise. Finally, to the extent that students gain a broadened sense of the variety and range of experiences that images can encompass, shape, and convey, together with a new confidence in the power of words to communicate that experience, to that extent students are becoming sensitized t· the power and value of visual art and are experiencing the world and their own capacities in a new light.

Nora Chase

FILM, ORAL HISTORY, AND COMPOSITION

Many students at Kingsborough Community College, and I suspect elsewhere, lack an awareness of history, both as a concept and as a past that continues into their own lives. The absence of historical depth is revealed in the flat self-concepts and ideas they present in their writing. One aim of my second semester composition course, "Working Women in America," is, therefore, to instill in students some sense of the past, both personal and collective, so they can begin to connect it to current problems and options. I have found films to be of great help in this process.

The films help students to understand the course readings and facilitate the transfer of concepts and methods to their own research and writing. For the first half of the semester, students keep a daily journal which must relate to the course, and they are required to make a journal entry on each film. When writing about the films, they always exceed the one-page minimal requirement. Film journals express their admiration for the things women have done, such as picketing, organizing day care centers, going to jail, and working in non-traditional jobs. I find that the journal writing improves as students realize that the course content relates directly to their own lives and futures, and the films are immensely helpful in fostering this realization.

After several weeks of reading oral histories and seeing films using this technique, students are assigned original oral history research. The assignment is to complete two in-depth interviews relating to work-life histories. Students are asked to interview the oldest man and the oldest woman they know who are willing to be interviewed. Interview questions are developed by the class and adapted by each student for each interview; often a session involves fifty to a hundred questions. Both men and women are asked about child care and housework, as well as about paid labor. Interviews are written in either question-and-answer or in biographical-essay form; then students write a short essay comparing the work histories of their two subjects. Students enjoy these assignments and are proud of their work. Some discover surprising information. I remember one young woman reporting to the class her astonishment when she discovered that her "stay-at-home" grandmother had in fact spent forty years in the paid labor force. As a result of this work, students' interest in and respect for their elders and for history is often dramatically increased.

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The students' oral histories, if relevant, are integrated into a research paper which the course requires. One student added additional interviews to her original interview with an immigrant and combined this information with library research to produce an excellent paper on the experiences of black women immigrants from the Caribbean Islands to the United States between 1960 and 1975. Some students utilize their interview techniques in researching current topics and incorporate this information with library research into their papers. One student pretended to be a battered wife with three children and made numerous phone calls in an effort to get some assistance. For a few weeks each class began with the student's classmates asking her whom she had called the previous day and what had happened. They were not happy to learn that the hot-line for battered women was operating only Monday through Friday from 9 to 5. Her paper revealed much about the dilemma of battered women in New York City. Many student papers evince an equally fine meshing of interview and oral history techniques with traditional research methods.

The readings from feminist literature which I use for the course are drawn from four academic disciplines. The readings include Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change; Pink Collar Workers; Women Working; Our Bodies, Ourselves; selections from Toward a New Psychology of Women; and relevant articles.

In conjunction with Moving the Mountain, I show the films With Babies and Banners (1978), Salt of the Earth (1953), Union Maids (1976), and Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker (1981), films which relate to women's participation in political or union-organizing and strike actions. Students have more difficulty with the historical material in Moving the Mountain than with any of the other readings. The book is an oral history text which describes the lives of three women activists, each of whom comes from a different ethnic group, class background, and period of the twentieth century.

The first section of Moving the Mountain tells the story of Florence Luscomb (b. 1887), who came from an upper-middle-class white family, worked in the suffrage movement, joined the NAACP and the ACLU, became active in the labor movement, ran for governor in Massachusetts, lived in communes, and visited China and Cuba. The two films that help students relate to women and the trade union movement are With Babies and Banners and Union Maids. With Babies and Banners shows the role women played in the victory of the General Motors Sitdown Strike in Flint, Michigan, in 1937. The film skillfully weaves together actual newsreel flashbacks and the nine women's own stories told as they gather for the 40th Anniversary Convention of the UAW. At the end of the film, the women of the 1977 convention successfully demand fifteen minutes of platform time for a pro-ERA speech. Their spokesperson turns out to be one of the leaders of the 1937 Women's Emergency Brigade. This film was nominated for an Academy Award, as was Union Maids, another oral history film and a classic union film. According to Pete Seeger, Union Maids "makes the '30s live through three militant, high-humored women, who relate how they helped organize shops 40 years before."

Both films serve to make the character of a woman like Florence Luscomb real and comprehensible for students. In addition, for those to whom 1937 is just a date, these films provide the color, sound, and costumes of the period. Through films such as these, students see the historical role of trade unionism and of women's contributions as wives, mothers, workers, and

activists. Students are surprised by the active role taken by women before World War II; they are even more amazed later in the course, when, while interviewing their own families, they discover that some of their fathers or mothers or grandparents also played active roles in workplace struggles.

The second part of Moving the Mountain tells the story of Ella Baker (b. 1903), a Shaw University graduate from a middle-class, black Southern background, who has fought all her life in the Civil Rights movement. The film Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker (1981) portrays her life and times through the theme suggested by its title--"Fundi" is a Swahili word denoting the person in a community who passes on skills from one generation to another. Ella Baker helped develop some of the famed leaders of the black struggle, as well as many unknown local community leaders.

I was astounded by an incident that occurred after I showed this film to one class. When asked what they thought of the film, two young black women expressed their surprise that any white people had helped in the struggle for civil rights for blacks. The possibility that blacks and whites could struggle together for the rights for blacks had never occurred to them; they were simply unaware of this part of history.

In order to relate this film to the process of oral history and library research, I describe to my students how I discovered, through a combination of both methods, that Rosa Parks, who refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery and thus began the famous boycott, had in fact been trained by Ella Baker in sessions run in Atlanta the preceding summer. Stimulated by this film, some students want to prepare research papers on Ella Baker, but unfortunately there isn't enough material available; those who choose to work on Rosa Parks are more successful. A number of students work on other important black women leaders.

The visual images of Fundi help students to understand the major issues, as well as to learn the historical facts of a struggle that took place before they were old enough to be aware of it. After they see the film, the reading material makes more sense to them.

The last section of Moving the Mountain tells the story of Jessie de la Cruz (b. 1919), a Chicano mother of six and a migrant farm worker, who became a United Farm Workers organizer, ran a hiring hall, taught English, was a delegate to the 1972 Democratic Convention, helped found National Land for People, and continues in the struggle.

My urban students especially love the Jessie de la Cruz section, partly because they identify with her working-class wife and mother's experiences, especially after they see Salt of the Earth. A full-length fictionalized account of a New Mexico miners' strike of the early 1950s, Salt is a serious treatment of racial and gender discrimination, as well as of trade unionism. It gives an amazingly accurate portrayal of the early 1950s and yet is thoroughly contemporary in the issues it raises. The Feminist Press filmscript of Salt of the Earth contains articles on the actual strike and the making of the film.

The films, along with the readings, raise issues vital to the writing process. Students discuss why people choose to seek certain information, how

and where they get this information, and how they present it to their audience. They debate whether a documentary, such as With Babies and Banners, is more objective than a fictionalized account, such as Salt of the Earth. They examine their assumption that documentaries are "true" and fiction is "made up" and thereby "false." The pro-union bias of the films leads them to discuss objectivity and subjectivity in both film and writing, which in turn generates interest in the content and methodology of traditional history versus the "new" social history.

The films help my students to learn--and to apply to their own lives--concepts and methods which are new to them. The films raise major issues and portray women as active participants and often victors in their life struggles. The demonstration that the average person's life is important and has a place in history--that activism is possible and fairly common--gives my students a positive sense of themselves. This self-worth is reflected in the quality of both the research they do and the written work resulting from it.

NOTES

[1] The Boston Women's Health Collective; Our Bodies, Ourselves (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976) (The New Our Bodies, Ourselves. Simon & Schuster, January 1985); Canterou, Ellen with Susan Gushee O'Malley and Sharon Hartman Strom, Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1980); Hoffman, Nancy and Florence Howe, eds., Women Working: An Anthology of Stories and Poems (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1979); Howe, Louise, Pink Collar Workers (Avon, 1978); and Miller, Jean Baker, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Beacon Press, 1977).

Marie Jean Lederman

LITERATURE AND OPEN ADMISSIONS STUDENTS: TEACHING SHORT STORIES THROUGH FILMS

There are some basic questions that I ask myself before I teach "sophisticated" literature to my non-traditional, open admissions students at Baruch College. The first question is, why am I teaching literature? The answer for me is that I love to read, and I would give a great deal to make my students comfortable enough with the printed page to allow them to love it also.

In addition, I don't see much of a difference between print literature and visual literature--the literature to which my students are constantly exposed on television and in the movies. Many of the techniques are the same: point of view, selection and omission of details, symbolism and symbolic language, and structure or form. Students need an ability to evaluate what they read and see, and I believe that the teaching of literature, both print and visual literature, will give them something essential for a thinking human being. We can extend our lives through literature, and we can better evaluate the lives we have. I do believe that the end of reading is living and not reading.

The second question is, why am I teaching this particular piece of literature? One criterion for me, at least in teaching freshmen, is length. I like to use short pieces of literature, and this limits me generally to poetry and short stories. My students generally are slow readers, and, at the beginning at least, I want them to have some success with their reading. A short story, no matter how difficult, can be read a few times in a week.

I choose to teach literature that I like and to which I think my students can respond; this has to do with character and theme. However, in addition, I like to choose stories which allow me to discuss point of view, symbolism and structure. Therefore, a story like "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," with its flashing back and forth across time, dealing with psychological versus clock time, is a good choice for me. "Owl Creek" has also been made into a fine film which, because of the nature of the film medium, treats time differently from the way the written story does.

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The story has a number of connections with my students. To begin with, we can look at the question of time--emotional as opposed to clock time. This is something which my students all know a great deal about, especially in school, and unfortunately especially in some of their English classes, in which fifty minutes can seem like two months. Moreover, the theme of the story is one to which students can respond; they know something about the idea of an individual versus the group, in this case a Southern plantation owner who is about to be hanged because of a crime against the Union army. (It is interesting to see the ways in which my students respond to this hero because he is the underdog, despite the fact that he is on the "wrong" side of the Civil War.) The Union army represents the punishing society, and the story makes a strong anti-war statement to which many of my students respond. They are interested in the nature of heroism--what is there in life that is worth dying for? Is <u>anything</u> worth dying for?

There are problems for my students in reading this story. The vocabulary is difficult for them, and the structure of the story is difficult. So I ask students to read the story twice at home. Then we see the film. It is a lovely film, with a minimum of dialogue, translating the printed page into visual symbol, sound, and music.

My students are tuned into visual and auditory images and, without too much trouble, can begin to learn how to treat such literary terms as point of view, selection of detail, symbol, and structure. They can see this more easily with the film than with print literature. However, once we have discussed these in the film, we then go back to the story and look at the similarities and differences between the two. Students become conscious of the ways in which film differs from print, and they learn something of the possibilities of each medium.

In the story, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," the moving back and forth across time is signaled by the paragraphing. This excerpt from one student's paper discusses this difference between the way in which time is handled in the film as opposed to its treatment in the story:

> The time sequence is indeed the most important factor that makes the story and film differ. In the story we can actually be aware of it by the visual clue of the gap between paragraphs, when there is a time change. The reader knows then that the gap is there to serve the purpose of introducing new material. In this case it is to let us know that all that was going on was just a very quick flashback in Peyton Farquhar's mind and his hope to escape. Here the reality can be detected from the myth.
>
> In the film there is a smooth flow in time sequence, such that the viewer would not probably be aware of the actual situation til the end of the film when Farquhar is reaching his home and he is running towards his wife. She is also running towards him but we can see she is doing it in slow motion and it seems like they are never going to meet. The director uses this device to inform us of the actual situation in the story and hint the suspense to come.

My students are fascinated by the fact that it is only at the very end of the film that the viewer discovers that the entire sequence of events has taken place in the mind of the hero who is about to be hanged. In this sense, the story is much "fairer" to the reader than the film. The perceptive reader may guess what is actually happening and realize that the hero's flight to freedom is imaginary--existing only in the mind of the man who is about to die.

Symbols in the film are used consistently and are apparent to the student viewers, especially when they have first read the story. Students easily pick up the paired symbols of light and darkness, of nature and guns. They see these as symbolic of life as opposed to death. One student wrote:

> Both the film and the story use a lot of symbols. They imply to the reader an abstract and ominous feeling. At the beginning of the occurrence, the sky was dark and only the owl's crazy noises broke the deathly silence. There, at the Owl Creek Bridge, the army was guarding, and ready to carry out the execution of Peyton Farquhar, a well-to-do planter of a highly respected Alabama family. He stood in the middle of the bridge, with hands and legs tied, let his gaze wandered to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. The Owl Creek Bridge connected his life and death. He could see driftwood flowing down the current. Once again Farquhar fixed his thoughts on his family. If only he could free himself and follow where the driftwood flowed, he could get back to his sweet home again.

The film also explores the nature of fantasy and reality, to which one student responded in this way:

> When Farquhar was marched up to be hanged at the bridge that he was supposed to destroy, his whole attitude changed. Instead of wanting to die for his cause like a true patriot should, he became reluctant. He began to think about his family and how he would be able to escape to be with them. He thought of this desire so much that he began to think of it as coming true, but the reality fought so hard against Farquhar's desires and dreams of escape and freedom that in the end the reality won, and Peyton Farquhar was hanged by the neck until he was dead.

By comparison to the film, the story becomes easier to comprehend and, I have found, subsequent stories also become easier to discuss, for we have the film of Occurrence at Owl Creek (1962) as a point of reference.

I have had great success in using short stories and films in my freshman composition classes. Although the excerpts from my students' papers have errors in standard written English, the writing is lively and often quite beautiful. Their essays become a good starting point for discussions of usage, punctuation, sentence structure--because these are meaningful communications of ideas.

The following short stories have been made into films, and I have had varying degrees of success working with them: Saki's The Open Window (1972); Jackson's, The Lottery (1969); Aiken's Silent Snow, Secret Snow (1964); Mansfield's The Garden Party (1974); and Stockton's The Lady or the Tiger (1969).

Moving from one medium to another is difficult. However, this teaches students something about the nature of art and the nature of various media. It teaches them to observe, to evaluate, to think, to make connections. It trains them to look for detail and structure, and this makes them better writers. More important, it helps them to understand literature and, through literature--hopefully--life.

Vera Jiji

USING TELEVISED DRAMA TO TEACH WRITING

Televised drama can be a useful tool for improving students' writing skills by helping them sharpen a number of the cognitive abilities which most English teachers think of as essential to effective communication.

It is true that most students can write better about their personal experiences than about expository topics of a more general nature; yet even here, they need to develop sharper skills. They need to develop the habit of observing carefully and then describing honestly what they observe, rather than settling for the nearest cliche about the subject. Almost all of my students need practice in learning to detail the specific observations which give liveliness and substance to their writing. They also need to develop sensitivity to the nuances of their own language, so that they can anticipate (and understand) their audience's reactions to their essays. To cope with all these requirements of good writing, they must become sufficiently engaged to care about their work.

Additional skills come into play when students deal with secondary source materials. Here students must learn to read carefully and report with relative accuracy what they've read; they must learn the etiquette of reporting: quotation, paraphrase, summary of source materials, and footnoting. They need to learn to make judgements about the validity of their sources' opinions, and to support their own views logically. Again, only if they care enough about their subject to want to arrive at a cogent judgment will students attempt mastery of these complex skills.

To create an environment in which these skills can be improved, students must first identify them and focus directly on their development. Two key elements are prerequisite in such a classroom. First, everybody's writing must be on one subject. It doesn't matter what the subject is as long as all the students are familiar with it, so that a real exchange of views can develop. Second, the subject must be chosen so that the students care enough to get involved, but it should not be so personal or so emotionally weighted that they will not be willing to share their real views, or risk taking issue with their classmates.

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To help teachers create such an environment, new anthologies of excellent essays about various controversial topics appear with great frequency. But even the best of such books seem, often, to be of little interest to my students. On the other hand, there are real advantages in motivating student writing by using televised programs as the original stimulus. This procedure follows a time-honored educational precept: to look at the skills students already have and design a program to take them from where they are now to where we want them to go. While this kind of work is not a "quick fix," it can provide measurable success.

Now, why would watching a television program stimulate students' writing better than reading an essay would? This is in part because a large part of their social chitchat consists of the informal exchange of quick judgments about popular TV programs. As we all know, having the "right" kind of taste defines people's in-group status in this society (for professors as well as for students), so students enjoy discussing such preferences and judgments. Then too, as students have been watching TV all their lives, they believe themselves to be experts in this arena, and are more willing to enter a discussion of it than of written material of similar complexity. As long as the program chosen isn't close enough to their intimate problems to rouse anxieties, students are willing to concentrate on observing carefully and articulating afterward what they have seen. Then, as needed, a cassette of the TV show can be used to recheck what has been said. Students get feedback on the accuracy of their observations; it becomes a game, and they become quite involved with the process.

In practice, what makes it more interesting for students is that they think they know all the answers ahead of time. But they are usually surprised to discover how their apparently off-hand judgments result from hundreds of minute observations which they have made almost subconsciously. Making this discovery encourages them to become more aware of those details which govern their responses in other cases involving interpretation--both of TV and of written texts. Thus the transfer of the sharpened power of observation is encouraged.

The discovery of the details which govern their judgment takes place in the classroom when they are presented with two different versions of the same dramatic scene and asked to describe what happened in each version, what effect each version had on their interpretation of the scene's meaning, and how each effect has been achieved technically. (I have developed these materials over several years through a course originally sponsored by an NEH Pilot Grant.) Thus they get practice in observation and careful description. As different students describe additional details to account for the group's general feeling about the scene, they discover the importance of such detail. They also discover how carefully their judgments have been manipulated. Through examining the ways in which the scene has been presented, they gain insight into how producers (and by analogy, writers) control the text.

For example, my students recently watched one scene from Othello (1983) as produced for television by the BBC, starring Anthony Hopkins and Bob Hoskins, and as done in a film version starring Laurence Olivier and Frank Finlay (1965). After seeing the scene (III, iii, in which Iago first puts the idea of Desdemona's betrayal into Othello's mind: "Beware, my lord, of jealousy"), they compared the two versions. It was readily apparent that

in the BBC version Iago is the stronger, while in the film Othello is dominant. But what is interesting is the degree to which students could give a detailed explanation of how this effect was managed. They noticed that the BBC version keeps Iago on camera far longer and places him visually between Othello and Desdemona--albeit in the background--as the latter converse. He also sits in Othello's chair, symbol of the latter's authority. In contrast, the film shows many shots of Olivier alone. This Othello physically dominates Iago, hands Iago his discarded outer garments, and otherwise indicates the latter's lower status. (Of course, many additional details were considered to provide an explanation of the effects. These are merely illustrative.)

Seeing how the same text can be made to seem so different in the two productions taught these students how strongly the details control the point of view. The exercise illustrated the point that there is no such thing as the presentation of an event which is purely "objective," which doesn't attempt to control the audience's reaction in some way by its presentational style. When students differ in their analysis of the meaning of what they all agree they have seen, they learn another lesson. One student felt that because Hopkins didn't react as obviously to Iago's insinuations as did Olivier, he was being depicted as having a stronger, more intellectual, and more stable personality. It took the entire class' astonishment to convince her that her interpretation was not self-evident. Meanwhile, the rest of the class had learned that the visual text, like any sign system or language, changes meaning with each viewer.

Once these skills are practiced for TV viewing, how much transfer to the processes of reading and writing occurs? It varies a great deal with the individual. But every student shows increased ability to observe pertinent details, to appreciate that it is the writer's style which controls the raw substance of experience, to remember the subjective nature of interpretation. Those whose analytical skills remain tied to the visual at least have learned something about TV (namely, that it has designs on them), have contributed to the class, and no longer feel completely alienated from the process of communication and analysis of communication which goes on in the classroom. The better students transfer more of the learning to their work as readers. And some of them can begin to think along similar lines in designing and controlling their own prose.

These students can draw the analogy between concentrating the camera on the actor playing Othello and a similar effect in a text through extended description of a particular individual or moment. They contrast a concentration on one central figure ("a close-up") with a broader perspective ("like a long shot"). They learn first to recognize and then to manipulate the relationship between detail and generalization, perspective and point of view.

The visual elements of the television program can be seen as analogous to individual words. Shadows and bright lighting correspond respectively to the omitted detail or the detail lovingly described. The bodies of the actors are like the connotations of words--attached to and giving a particular tonality to the basic meaning. The actors' costumes can literally be compared to colorful language. Hoskins was given a cockney accent as Iago, to signal the class difference between himself and Othello. The students' sensitivity to Iago's manner of speech can be pointed towards an understanding that their

writing, too, can signal a class level by its appearance and "dress" (typed or scrawled, etc.). And so on.

Another not-so-incidental benefit of this work occurs as I learn more respect for the less articulate students' mode of understanding--primarily visual--and no longer assume that their sometimes almost blank papers reflect almost blank minds. I must confess that I began by assuming that all intelligent students could write well, and that students who couldn't write well couldn't have understood what they saw. That there were students with another style of communication was borne vividly home to me when I showed a class The Fugitive Kind (1960), the film version of Tennessee Williams' play, Orpheus Descending. One girl remarked that she hated it, but couldn't say why. I insisted that she try to articulate what had bothered her. "All that shit," she replied with undergraduate elegance. As I continued to insist that she explain herself, she reluctantly replied: "The way the trees were set to look like Gothic arches in a cathedral in the forest with the light coming through them when they were falling in love and...." I've long since forgotten her list, but it was copious, detailed, accurate, and sensitive. She had seen far more clearly than I had. What she had hated, she explained, was the overwhelming way in which the filmmakers had tried to manipulate her response. While her written work during that semester never matched the keenness of her visual intelligence, she, and other similar students who followed in later semesters, succeeded in teaching me that many of our students who grew up watching TV have acquired a kind a visual analytic power which they find difficult to transfer or translate into language.

But I teach English, and so I proceed, trying to get these visually oriented students to demonstrate their understanding of words by an act of transference to visual signs. I sometimes have them stage scenes in class from plays they read. When Macbeth says he can't sit at the banquet table because it's already full, they better not have placed him previously in a chair. When Lady Macbeth tells him a little water will cleanse him of his deed, he better have gory hands. (If these options seems obvious to my readers, they are not obvious to my students.) I am not suggesting that all freshmen read Shakespeare in their composition courses. Again, these are merely illustrative examples. Nor is this the only way to get students to read carefully, but it does involve the students actively, gives immediate feedback, and is fun. And, for students who get almost all their "made up stories" from television, reading plays of genuine merit has another value: it can train their tastes so that the audience for higher quality programming is, perhaps, somewhat increased.

When it comes to the second semester, I use the TV shows and the Handbooks of Source Materials developed in my NEH Curriculum Materials Grant to teach the research paper. The shows feature Uncle Tom's Cabin and One-third of a Nation, the latter a Living Newspaper Federal Theatre play of 1938 about the U. S. housing crisis. (These TV shows are available in video cassettes of any standard format. They can be rented or purchased by contacting me, c/o The Department of English, or from Multimedia Studies in American Drama, Brooklyn College.)

Why these plays, these subjects? Again, it is important to remember that an ideal topic interests the students, but is not so close to their intimate problems that it prevents real communication (i.e., confrontation, challenge,

disagreement) from taking place. Ideally, students should bring their own life interests to class, but that seldom happens, since most of my students regard the composition class as a kind of detention center. That means that the "best" research paper topic, in their minds, is the one which will involve the least effort. Any attempts to get them to define the goal in relation to their self-actualizing goals only stiffen their resistance. "Just tell us what you want!" they moan. So after years of resisting their passivity, I now assign a topic for them to investigate.

Ideally, once a subject has been assigned, the eager researcher rushes to the library to burrow happily among the stacks, to see what treasures of knowledge lie there. But not my students. The fact that they don't know their way around a library doesn't distress me as much as it used to. Information retrieval is undergoing a vast technological revolution, and most of my students will no doubt be quite comfortable with computer data bases, not missing the sources the data base cannot yield. In all probability most of them will do no unguided library research on their own (despite the reform movement for writing across the curriculum). Those whose upper-level courses demand more sophisticated library skills will seek them out.

What does remain important for all our students to learn is how to read a source carefully, to sum up an argument fairly, to evaluate a given text for its relative reliability and its hidden (or obvious) biases, to seek out a variety of points of view toward an issue, to weigh one point of view against another, to quote and paraphrase without plagiarizing, to recognize that the different genres of the sign systems we call writing (autobiography, journals, newspaper and eye-witness accounts, secondary source studies, reports, fiction, illustrations, blueprints, playscripts, dramas, and TV shows) all use rhetorical devices to control the reader's thinking on whatever subject is at hand. One of the critical points they should learn to understand is the incalculable role played in their lives by the linguistic constructs of our culture.

Given all this, I have chosen to focus on plays whose subjects are of interest to my students, but not too personal for discussion. Uncle Tom's Cabin, for instance, played a large role in shaping the way white Americans saw blacks during much of our history, for it was the world's greatest hit, dominating theatre in this country, in continuous performance for eighty years! After students have seen our videotape of the play, certain questions naturally arise. "Is this character an 'Uncle Tom'?" and "What is an 'Unole Tom'?" become interesting questions. "Which is closer to the script's intention, as you understand it?" again motivates close perusal of the text, which (at least as I see it) presents Tom as a figure of great dignity and heroism. Topsy, too, is an eye-opener for them. The little slave girl who "just growed," is enacted as an intelligent child whose misbehaviour is a consequence of and an appropriate response to her oppression. While this interpretation is a far cry from the grotesque Topsy of the show-biz tradition, it can be amply supported both by what Stowe said about her creation in the Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin and in Topsy's dialogue about why she is so "wicked." If the students have been asked to read the play before seeing the videotape, they create Toms and Topsys in their imaginations who can be compared to those in the videotaped version. It becomes quite easy to see how the mind of the reader or viewer is controlling the image--modifying the words in the text.

Students are then led back to the Handbook of Source Materials, which gives an assortment of written articles, and asked to consider what social factors influence the portrayals of the characters and what role the genre itself plays in the nature of the knowledge conveyed by that text. The students are told to use the discrete items in the Handbook as their only source materials for writing their papers.

Although these sources have been provided for them, they now must learn how to cite materials, to weigh evidence, to substantiate their views--processes we can practice, using these controlled sources. Since the class shares all their raw materials, they can comment on each other's use of the sources. I can control plagiarism from the given sources and avoid their copying from sources outside the assigned work.

Students do not need to be told that, with some twenty-five of them reading the same handbooks, there will nevertheless be twenty-five different points of view and twenty-five different choices of supporting materials to substantiate the writers' arguments. They are only too happy to assert "That's my opinion!" and to believe that all opinions are equally worthwhile, but their tolerance results not from an informed humanistic acceptance of intellectual differences, but from an unwillingness to consider how evidence can be judged.

What they need to learn is that some opinions are better than others because the writer has used the original sources more fairly, or more thoroughly, or for support for more interesting original ideas. Again, only by having them all work with the same subject matter can the instructor make this point. Using the materials at hand, the instructor and students can compare various papers and examine the validity of their thinking. Thus students can begin to see the bases for teachers' judgments and understand why their grades are earned rather than given.

In short, this kind of work begins with students' interests, encourages them with an initial feeling of mastery, moves from consideration of the visual to the verbal, shows them how writers use methods of control similar to those used by the producers of film or TV with which they are more familiar, puts them in possession of source materials needed to arrive at a solidly supported hypothesis, gives them the opportunity to sort through, apply and evaluate the use by their classmates of primary and secondary resources, and deals with a subject of some interest to them while keeping it resolutely away from the personal. It thus offers a useful tool for the teaching of intellectual capacities which are a part of the arsenal of every good writer.

Frank Masiello

THE LESSONS OF POPCORN

> "Some people can read War and Peace and come away thinking it's a simple adventure story. Others can read the ingredients on a chewing gum wrapper and unlock the secrets of the universe...."
>
> - Lex Luthor in
> Superman: The Movie

Commercial motion pictures are often thought of as one of the chewing gum wrappers of our popular culture, but are they really so much disposable junk? Perhaps it is that movies just might unlock certain secrets of useful knowledge--if not of the universe, then of the world we inhabit and of the very same basic values of human decency that we as teachers are obligated to instill in our students.

A great deal of what is often ignored, criticized, or, at best, overlooked in our popular entertainment--popular not merely among our students, but among our instructional colleagues as well--can be tapped as potentially rich resources for use in our various composition classes.

This paper is concerned with the prospect of talking and writing about the values found in motion pictures, all kinds of motion pictures from popcorn movies to art films, with an emphasis on the former. It does not propose that we set out to begin film-production courses, nor that we rent films outside of the CUNY Consortium for viewing within our classrooms. With limited budgets and limited time, composition courses may not always be the place for these in-class or hands-on film experiences. The keynote then will be on discussions leading to compositions, together with the usual topics for work within our classes and with the same intent: to allow our students opportunities to explore and express their thoughts and feelings on a variety of aspects of life, while sharpening their perceptions of the world and of themselves.

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One of the main attributes of motion-picture study is that films are highly researchable. Reviews of films are found in our daily newspapers, our weekly magazines, and our college and neighborhood libraries. In every copy of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, consulting the alphabetical entries under "Motion Picture Reviews" provides the researcher with lists of many of the film reviews and commentaries which have appeared in a number of readily accessible periodicals like Time, Newsweek, The New Yorker, and The New York Times. Often after reading just one or two serious articles, readers can discern whether a film is worth their or their class's time. They can also learn how to view a particular set of films critically for content and form, meaning and art, and most important for our purposes--decent human values.

To illustrate this notion of redeeming social values: a lighthearted movie like Popeye (1980) can arouse interest among curiosity seekers and people wanting an escape from the pressures of reality. Yet when one considers that the screen play for this movie was written by Jules Feiffer, more attention might be paid to its dialogue. The reward is a significant, almost throw-away line when Popeye mumbles, "Wrong is wrong, even if it helpks ya." It is a noteworthy moment because it represents the very reason for being for the heroic sailor and exemplifies, quite simply, the basic value of honesty shared by many screen characters, especially by the larger-than-life heroes in films aimed at the young.

Of course many viewers might not even notice Popeye's words, but his actions speak loudly, as do those of most of the men and women we are supposed to like and admire in motion pictures. Even when they are not delivered with fanfare, the messages are there to be absorbed, and it can be that we teachers can make a difference, and help the effectiveness of these often subtle moments, by alerting our students to look for them and to listen for revealing dialogue for themselves.

Finding meaningfulness in unexpected places can be both a stimulating and pleasurable experience and can help lend "respectability" to the enjoyment of junk-food motion pictures. In Superman: The Movie (1978), written by Mario Puzo and others, when the teenage Clark Kent defines his enjoyment of his super powers to his foster father, he reasons, "Is it showing off when somebody's doing the thing he's capable of doing? Is a bird showing off when it flies?" The discovery of such a poetic sentiment from such an unlikely source is quite beautiful. When in Altered States (1980), written by Paddy Chayefsky, Doctor Jessup discusses with his wife the nature of his scientific investigations, he explains, "I have found the ultimate truth: It is that there is no ultimate truth!" Here the wit and verbal playfulness are distinctly literary. That each of the above-named writers is also included in our anthology textbooks, and therefore in our lessons, makes even their efforts for commercial films worthy of our consideration. Folk art can often yield as many values as elitist art.

Certainly it is not exclusively the genre films, the real popcorn sellers like musicals, adventure stories, and science fiction epics that reveal values and truths about the human condition to observant, active viewers, but the more serious films as well. It is not surprising that works such as Chariots of Fire (1981), Kramer vs. Kramer (1979), and Ordinary People (1980) are not only artistic and critical successes, but popular films also, discussed by

both students and teachers alike. It would be unfortunate, therefore, to overlook any types of quality motion pictures as material for classroom assignments. There are vast varieties of films to select from and large assortments of potential lessons to be taught from them.

A lively and thought-provoking brainstorming session can be created, for example, around family relationships as portrayed not only in the above-named dramas but also in such recent motion pictures as Breaking Away (1979), Country (1984), The Deer Hunter (1978), The Godfather (1971), Missing (1982), On Golden Pond (1981), Places in the Heart (1984), Saturday Night Fever (1977), and Terms of Endearment (1983). If these movies are no longer available in theaters, most of them can be expected on television in months to come, and they can be used for classroom purposes just as effectively when on the home screen.

In fact, with the aid of a reliable television directory, such as TV Guide, viewings for homework assignments can easily be planned. (Surely some films will conflict with several students' work schedules, so optional assignments can be devised as alternatives, such as watching a different movie, perhaps of the students' choice, within a given number of days and then writing about it according to the standards of the prescribed assignment. The logistical details can be worked out. After all, we encounter absenteeism, lost textbooks, and other forms of incomplete student participation almost every day, yet we persevere.) The television listings identify the year of original release, which makes the use of The Reader's Guide a simple matter and aids lesson preparation.

Assignments in the kinds of films chosen can be quite diversified, and, although the emphasis is on content rather than form, very often one can illuminate the other. Thus, such aesthetic considerations as comparisons between literature and film (Ragtime [1981], Sophie's Choice [1982], The World According to Garp [1982], as well as titles available through the CUNY Consortium: Animal Farm [1954], Hamlet [1948], and Lord of the Flies [1963]) or the use of symbolism (King Kong [1933], Psycho [1960]) can lead to other pursuits, including reading the original book, seeing all art forms with more awareness, and learning a practical introduction to doing research--since our students themselves will probably enjoy finding and reading film-related articles in back-date periodicals. This ability to research will come in handy for the students in their activities outside the classroom.

To help illuminate the world in which we live, themes for discussion and writing could also revolve around sexual and racial roles and stereotypes, perceptions of American government and politics, and the mythological and theological implications of such motion pictures as Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), E.T. (1982), Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), and Star Wars (1977) and its sequels.

As teachers, we could attempt to dovetail our lessons with the movies offered by the student activities office or those screened by the various college clubs, but experience has shown that organizing field trips with college-age students who are not majoring in our courses does not meet with much success. Hence, the recommendation is to assign viewings of theatrical motion pictures or movies shown on television when students can control their own time schedules.

Heretofore virtually ignored in our classrooms, the use of popular motion pictures for classroom assignments can be a rewarding and varied learning resource which can be utilized together with the more traditional methods and topics of instruction. Actively viewing popular movies may help our students "unlock" some universal truths and enhance their perception of the world.

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Brian Gallagher

LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES AND FILMIC PARADIGMS: NOTES TOWARD A VISUAL PEDAGOGY OF WRITING

> Everytime something is to be explained, it is more prudent to begin by experiencing it.
>
> - Christian Metz[1]

Although it has been generally recognized that today's students, particularly those encountered in basic writing and composition courses, tend to be more visually than linguistically acute, it is the rare scholar-teacher who sees this educational fact-of-life as a unique educational opportunity rather than as a cause for dismay.[2] When material from the visual arts is introduced into the writing classroom, such material is typically utilized as either a stimulus for class discussion or as an element in the pre-writing process.[3] However, there is a strong tradition in visual arts scholarship which emphasizes the many links between verbal and visual forms of articulation, a tradition which suggests that, as teachers of writing, we may go beyond mere content analysis of the visual arts to establish valid, usable structural connections between the visual arts and writing.

Over the last thirty years, film scholarship has been particularly active in pursuing connections between verbal and filmic discourse: Raymond Spottiswode's A Grammar of the Film (1950), Christian Metz' Film Language (1967, 1974) and John Harrington's The Rhetoric of Film (1979) are among the many works which have utilized (and reformulated) linguistic models in an attempt to elucidate the structures and processes of film. On the logical assumption that such a methodology is reversible (that film "language" can be employed to illuminate aspects of written language), I have evolved a number of classroom approaches and techniques that utilize my students' ability to grasp and decipher filmic structures as a means to their understanding and creating analogous verbal structures.[4] In short, I believe I have found several efficacious methods of turning visual literacy into the ally, rather than the foe, of verbal literacy--although it should be emphasized that the methods detailed below are meant only to complement and not to replace, the traditional language-based approaches to the teaching of writing.

* * *

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The painter Ben Shahn has avowed that "form is the very shape of content...for form is not just the intention of content; it is the embodiment of content."[5] Understanding and appreciating the relevance of this concept is crucial for student writers--indeed, for all writers and for anyone trying to shape a communicative form. Perhaps the most common classroom approach to the necessity for holistic form is through the careful dissection by students and instructor of a number of essays and excerpts by "professional" writers, a procedure I would by no means suggest should be foresworn. I would, though, suggest that analysis of several short film sequences can be used to introduce the concept in a productive way, because a majority of the students will likely have a more immediate grasp of the meaning of a film sequence than they would of a prose passage and because analyzing a visual structure suspends the pressure of "imitative form" (that is, students feeling they must, in their writing, emulate the prose passages they are analyzing).

Toward the beginning of Frank Capra's Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939) there is a short sequence in which a crude, powerful political boss berates a weak, corrupt governor who is totally in his power. Students have no difficulty in "reading" this scene, easily grasping its narrative development and character interaction, as well as its underlying ironic intent. When questioned after an initial screening of the sequence, most students will explain "what happened" almost entirely in terms of the dialogue (who said what to whom and with what response), and a few might note how things were said (for example, the boss' menacing, sarcastic tone, the governor's timid, apologetic tone). However, when asked to concentrate on the visual arrangement of the scene during a re-viewing, students then notice that the boss, standing in deep shadow on the left and flanked by one of his "stooges" (also standing and in shadow), looms large and sinister, while the governor sits timidly at the right, his weak features and subservient position emphasized by the light from a table lamp. A third viewing of the "passage" confirms the student's growing awareness of the need for a holistic welding of form and content, of how visual arrangement, lighting, camera position, etc. are (must be) used to shape and emphasize the significance of what is said. They realize that even a simple passage like this one requires a structured, comprehensible interpretation[6] of visual and aural elements if it is to communicate its meaning fully.

While any number of films might serve as structural analogues for various aspects of the writing practice--all the films I utilized for my writing courses were from a relatively limited number available to my college at no cost--there are several criteria which should be borne in mind when films are selected:

1) Most films should be short, if shown in their entirety, and film excerpts need to be relatively self-contained or, at least, easily set in context by a few introductory remarks.

2) The essential meaning of the film or excerpt should be clear, relatively simple and graspable at first viewing. (Save Antonioni and Godard for other courses.)

3) The structural point to be illustrated analogically must be a major component of the film's or excerpt's superstructure.

4) The film or excerpt should be tied in with some sort of in-class writing, which, in turn, should lead, directly or indirectly, to a specific essay assignment.

If these criteria are met, and if the instructor makes it clear from the outset just how film will be utilized in the course, students will soon understand that although film is being employed in rather an unconventional (and rigorous) classroom manner, their course remains, first and last, a writing course and their course goal the notable improvement of their prose writing skills.

The six lessons described below are among the most successful film-based lessons I evolved over the course of a year of experimentation in my freshman composition courses. Substitutions--both for the films screened and the exact writing assignment connected to each--can easily be made. Something of the value and variety of this film-based approach will, I trust, be implied in these methodological descriptions.

I. The Importance Of Imagistic Writing

About beginning writers Mina Shaughnessy has noted:

> Three features of vocabulary stand out in papers of the basic group: a preponderance of vague nouns and ambiguous pronouns, a dependence on basic verbs, and an absence of modification. For reasons that are not always clear, or the same, writers at the basic level often fail to name the object or person or ideas they are writing about.[9]

Because silent films concentrate the viewer's attention solely on one imagistic source (to the exclusion of others), they often can be employed as means toward making student writing less vague and more concrete, less abstract and more visual (and by extension more aural, tactile, olfactory and gustatory).

A three-minute skating sequence in Chaplin's The Rink (1916) provides material for exercise in using varied, explicit verbs. The students are asked to describe in writing the movements in the sequence without using the same verb twice. Thus, they need to write that Charlie "glides into the rink on one leg, cuts between the other skaters, bumps into a fat man, loses his balance, regains it, slips and falls, rises and tips his hat". With each re-viewing of the sequence, students--working individually or in groups--notice additional movements and must find new verbs to describe them. At the conclusion of the lesson the students "collate" their descriptions, with the inevitable result--such is the speed and complexity of the kinetic passages in Chaplin's films--that virtually every student has noted at least one movement unnoted by the others. In fact, at this point students usually ask that the sequence be run yet again--to settle disputes about whether (or how) a particular action occurred. One essay assignment which grows naturally out of this lesson is to have students observe someone (at home, on the street, etc.) for fifteen minutes and then write a short, explicit essay describing the person's varied actions.

The Buster Keaton short The Playhouse (1921) is the basis for a more complex lesson on imagery in writing. After noting the puzzled, baffled person of the main character, we review the film to see what key images are used to convey this impression of the character. Inevitably, students will notice that the key image is the mirror, whether confusing the hero about his own identity and its reflection or further doubling the two sisters whom the hero has trouble keeping straight as it is. For this lesson, I break students into groups, and after the film analysis, have them list key images from their childhood, explaining to others in the group why they think each image is memorable and significant. From the list of images, students eventually choose one which will function as the organizing image for an essay on a childhood experience.

II. Complex Description

John Grierson's classic documentary, Night Mail (1936), which depicts the journey of the night mail train from London to Edinburgh (to a narrative written by W.H. Auden and music composed by Benjamin Britten), forms a near perfect analogue for process writing, since the film carefully and clearly includes all the varied functions performed in and by the train during its six-hour journey. The class is broken into four groups, each assigned to observe, record and write a composite description of one category of sub-process:

1) Actions inside the train (chiefly the sorting and bundling of mail postmarked for Scotland).

2) External actions while the train is moving (chiefly the collecting or depositing of mail pouches from or into the automatic devices beside the trackbed).

3) Actions at the stations (London, the Midlands, Edinburgh).

4) All other actions--i.e., not directly connected with the delivery of the mail (chiefly those of the railroadmen and citizens along the train route).

The subsequent discussion centers around how best the four sub-processes could be integrated into a written description of the overall process just seen on film, to what extent the film's quick, vivid cutting between sub-processes could (and should) be imitated in process writing, to what extent the actions in category 4 impinge upon the process and need to be included, and similar structurally oriented questions. One long-term assignment growing out of this session is for students to locate a mundane, plodding piece of process writing (e.g., directions from a cookbook, instructions in a government manual) and to rework it into the dynamic kind of process communication exemplified by Night Mail.[10]

III. Comparison And Contrast

My Childhood (1964), a television film which recreates the childhood of, first, Hubert Humphrey, then of James Baldwin, with each man speaking the voice-over narration in his segment, serves as a most effective introduction to the intricacies of a comparison-and-contrast structure. Before the film is

screened, students are told they will be asked to provide a list of twenty-five ways in which the childhoods of these two men differed. The contrasts are so multiple--rural/urban, idyllic/nightmarish, white/black, middle class/poor, loved/lonely, social/anti-social--that students have their list ready within ten or fifteen minutes. However, their homework assignment is to discover five significant ways in which the childhood of Hubert Humphrey in South Dakota and that of James Baldwin in Harlem were similar--e.g. both were American childhoods from roughly the same era; both men saw their relationships with their father as crucial and determining; both were smart students who eventually "outgrew" their childhood environment; both childhoods were the first chapter in "success stories."

After presenting their lists of similarities (in the subsequent class), students are ready to comprehend the irreducible necessity for both similarity and difference in any viable comparison-contrast structure. At this point I introduce some traditional essay-oriented exercises on comparison-and-contrast--for instance, an exercise, always done individually, on "Who I Am vs. Who I Would Like to Be." I do, though, return to My Childhood to make a further organizational point--noting that the film employs the "all A, then all B" structure, as opposed to a point-by-point presentation of each childhood ("A_1B_1-A_2B_2") etc. I have students discuss the viability of the film's chosen structure, first in absolute terms, then in relation to "imaginary scenarios" (shifting the film to the "A_1B_1-A_2B_2" structure) each five-member group draws up. After this, students are usually ready for, even eager for, one of their major term assignments: a comparison-and-contrast essay.

IV. Complex Description

The "Odessa Steps" sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's Potemkin (1924) is an oft-cited (and oft-screened) example of montage, the creation of meaning through the opposition (or collision) of a variety of short shots, all ultimately working to create a vivid, complete sense of an event--in this case, a sudden attack on the citizens of Odessa by the dreaded Tsarist army. Before screening this sequence I ask students to write a description of a public event they have recently attended (e.g., rock concert, wedding). After the first screening we discuss the overall impression of the scene: how Eisenstein created a sense of panic, disorder, shock and mayhem. Students then work over their descriptions, the usual result being an added vividness. The second screening is centered on emotional affectivity. We discuss the details which strongly rivet the viewer's attention (e.g., the close-up of a soldier's boot stepping on the hand of a fallen child, the very long shots of people running down the steps and dispersing every which way in panic) and try to find similarly effective details for each of the student essays. After a final screening we discuss some of the major structural aspects of the Odessa Steps sequence: its alternation of shots (close-up/medium/long/very long and stiffly marching soldiers/wildly fleeing crowd), its selection of certain members of the crowd for close attention (the legless man who uses his arms to fling himself down the steps in wild, rapid motions, the young mother who gapes in horror at the soldiers' bloody advance on her and her baby), and its creation of meaning through camera placement (e.g., the soldiers are almost always shot obliquely and from a distance, giving the impression they are so many faceless elements in a well-ordered destroying mechanism). Students work on incorporating similarly varied and indicative details into their

descriptions. When their papers are finished (at home), those final versions contrast markedly with the first drafts; whereas the original versions were quasi-narratives (essentially "what I felt and thought at a certain event"), the final versions are true descriptions of the event (organized to allow both group actions and indicative individual actions to define the meaning of the event).

V. The Use Of Significant Symbolism

Edward Sapir has written that "language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to see realities symbolically"[11]--and numerous modern thinkers have reminded us that language itself is a symbolic system. While it is important to stress to writing students, who all too often confuse words with the things words signify, the fact that language is a form of symbolic representation, it is also important to give them some basic notion of "symbolism" in the more specialized, "literary" sense, i.e., the use of physical, observable details in a way which also endows them with specific abstract meanings.

I have had some very definite success in using the opening sequence of Chaplin's Modern Times (1936) to introduce students to symbolism. Here we see Charlie in the famous "factory sequence," as an assembly-line worker abused by one mechanism after another until he finally goes temporarily insane. After screening the sequence, I ask students to write a paragraph describing it. These paragraphs typically are full of words which convey a symbolic understanding more than a literal one--human mechanization, alienation from the work process (in much the sense Marx discusses it), the "insane" pace of modern times and similarly abstract ideas predominate over literal descriptions of what went on in the sequence. In short, students, without being aware of it, "read" the sequence symbolically.

When rescreening the sequence, we try to note the physical objects and actions which most clearly produce the symbolic meaning: e.g., the "feeding machine" into which Charlie is strapped and from which he cannot extricate himself when it malfunctions and begins to beat him, the telescreen through which the company president spies on his employees in the bathroom, and, most memorable, the huge machine which engorges Charlie and runs him through its enormous gear. The real usefulness of the sequence, as opposed to most literary examples of symbolism that are introduced into the classroom, is that students interpret the sequence symbolically even before they are told it is symbolic or even before they learn precisely what symbolism is. Thus, they can easily be brought to understand how symbolism can function effectively to communicate ideas. From this point, I usually have students develop an essay organized around three or four explicit symbols--on topics like "Our Modern Times" (since Chaplin's film is nearly a half-century old), "Life in New York City" or "The Prospect of Aging."

VI. Argumentation

Many, if not most, composition texts and composition courses leave argument to the end. Doing so seems to me a wise procedure, since argument is probably the most difficult form of prose writing for beginning writers to master. In fact, most basic composition students can only be introduced to argument--their real mastery of the form will come in more advanced writing

courses. Because logic is the sine qua non of any effective prose argument, (a fact, unfortunately, too often given only lip service in texts), and because students often fail to perceive the enormous gaps between the beliefs they espouse in writing and what they see as the evidence supporting those beliefs, I have developed a film-based exercise which treats logical reasoning in prose in its most basic units (the sentence to the paragraph summary).

During the first of two classes, I screen the first half of Hitchcock's suspense thriller, The Thirty-Nine Steps (1935) (a film which, incidentally, my students enjoy enormously, whatever its "uses"). Just before each of six key occurrences in the narrative, I stop the film and ask the students to spend a minute considering what will happen next, then to write a simple declarative sentence expressing their conclusion and briefly stating the evidence supporting it. Limited to a single sentence, students are often forced to reason neatly and efficiently in prose--and with an amazing amount of accuracy. (They begin to watch the film very carefully.) The three student sentences which follow typify the clear, accurate responses the exercise draws in most cases:

> A riot is going to break out [in the music hall] because everyone is yelling at the same time.
>
> He [the hero] is going to escape [from the police] because the countryside is too open.
>
> I think Hannay will discover the guy he is talking to will be the one with the severed finger, since the man always keeps his hand in his pocket.

As a homework assignment students have to write two-paragraph summaries, the first summarizing the story of the first half of the film, the second derived from the first, summarizing what they expect to happen in the second half and why.

The second half of the film is screened in the second class with, again, the film stopped before each of six key occurrences and the students asked to write a prediction/rationale sentence. After the conclusion of the film, students write a "cause-and-effect" summary of it, the emphasis falling equally on what happened and why it happened. This activity--which normally has to be completed at home--forces students to rethink the whole story in rational terms and to separate the significant events from the many false clues Hitchcock sprinkles throughout the film. While such an exercise does not address the larger matter of the logical organization of a prose argument, it does lay a very basic groundwork for an approach to the matter: students become aware that argument papers rest on the justification of nearly every sentence they contain.[12]

Obviously, not every film-based lesson I tried worked equally well. For example, my attempt in one section to draw multiple sequences from the same film (Modern Times) created not the sense of unity I hoped it would, but instead, each time another sequence was screened, a growing curiosity about the overall story and something of distraction from the structural analogy each sequence was meant to illustrate. Another difficulty is that these film-based lessons also call for an unusual amount of preparation; films must

be previewed and selected (or rejected), specific sections must be scrutinized many times over, and lessons must be carefully crafted to fit the determinants of the chosen film or sequence. Still, after a year's experimentation with film-based lessons, I can safely say that the three hypotheses which prompted and structured the experiment (together with my strong interest in film, to be sure) have, in large measure, been proven correct:

1) That most beginning writing students have a strong awareness of what is happening in a visually oriented medium like film.

2) That students can easily come to see that their understanding of a film or sequence derives from specific organizations and structures within the film.

3) And that student writers can, through the analogy of film, come to recognize, create and employ similar organizations in their writing.

The results of my experiment do suggest that there is a definite and usable link between visual literacy and verbal literacy--and that, as teachers of writing, we should consider employing film, photography, painting and (yes) even television to create sophisticated methods for translating visual literacy into verbal literacy.

NOTES

1. "Aural Objects," Yale French Studies, 60: Cinema/Sound (1980), p. 32. It is significant that Metz, one of the most subtle and complex critics now writing about film, insists that understanding begins experientially; a similar concept underlies the whole "visual approach" to writing detailed in this essay.

2. A notable, but brief, exception is Joseph Comprone's "Using Painting, Photography and Film to Teach Narration," in Ideas for English 101: Teaching Writing in College, ed. Richard Ohmann and W.B. Coley (Urbana: NCTE, 1975), pp. 159-163.

3. Richard A. Maynard's The Celluloid Curriculum: How to Use Movies in the Classroom (New York: Hayden Book Co., 1971) typifies the "content only" approach. Harvey Wiener's "Media Compositions: Preludes to Writing" (College English, Feb. 1974, pp. 566-574) details one effective way the visual arts can be employed in the pre-writing process.

4. The discipline of semiotics, which treats language, cinema and numerous other fields as analogous "sign systems," offers perhaps the most fruitful theoretical approach toward understanding the conjunction of written and cinematic language. Unfortunately, the writing teacher will have to do a bit of imaginative "translation" of the sometimes esoteric and always intricate high criticism of semiotics into the language of classroom pedagogy. Anyone wishing to start the process should look at two basic texts: Roland Barthes' Elements of Semiology, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (1964; rpt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968) and Umberto Eco's A Theory of Semiotics (1976; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana

Univ. Press, 1979). Robert Scholes' Structuralism in Literature (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974) is an excellent discussion of the larger movement out of which semiotics grew and of which it is now a major branch.

5. The Shape of Content (1957; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 62,81.

6. Those instructors fortunate enough to have access to an analysis projector--which can freeze frames on the screen, as well as run a film backward or forward at a variety of speeds, down to four frames a second--will undoubtedly be able to make more detailed and intricate use of film segments as structural analogues. However, all the exercises detailed here require only a standard 16 mm projector and demand no more of the instructor than he or she learn to run the film backward (with the lamp off, so as not to detract students from the writing exercise they will be doing) to prepare the film or excerpt for repeat viewing.

7. In two of the lessons described in this essay I violate this rule--My Childhood (50 mins.) and The Thirty-Nine Steps (80 mins.) are shown in their entirety, the latter over two class periods. Screening the whole of a long film from time to time seems to help vary the rhythm of the course and to mitigate against the tendency to be overly parsimonious with the visual stimuli introduced into it.

8. Thus far, I have restricted my film-based experiments to freshman composition courses. I do, though, plan to conduct some experiments in my developmental writing courses and hope to develop some productive methods of relating film "grammar" to English grammar.

9. Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 199.

10. Of course, instructors who attempt an assignment of this type should be sure to have students hand in the original with their reworking of it.

11. Culture, Language, and Personality (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1961), p. 15.

12. Unlike the five film-based lessons described above, this one is not designed to lead directly into an essay assignment, but rather to lead into several further lessons on argumentation, after which an argument paper is assigned (as the final term writing project).

William V. Costanzo

VISUAL THINKING IN THE WRITING CLASS

Teachers and researchers generally agree that the population of students now entering American colleges differs from previous generations in significant ways. Large numbers of today's freshmen are less prepared for traditional college work. Their basic literacy skills have remained alarmingly underdeveloped, chiefly because they haven't exercised their abilities to read and write. By contrast, they are eager and experienced consumers of television, movies, and their proliferating electronic progeny: video recorders, videodiscs, videotexts, video games, computers.

These students face a major problem when they move from a world of audiovisual communications into an academic environment that is still dominated by the written word. This is particularly true of those undergraduates at open admissions institutions who typically have learned more by viewing than by reading, and who rely heavily on mental imagery when they compose their thoughts. To close them off abruptly from the familiar language of visual media is to deny them access to some of their richest resources for interpreting and making meaning. Yet this is precisely what happens in many freshman writing classes. We try to make up for lost time by plunging our most inexperienced readers headlong into the medium of pure print. The philosophy of total immersion may succeed for some, but vast numbers sink rather than swim, and whole schools just flounder around in the seas of academe until they, too, succumb to the attrition rate.

In the 1960s, educators explored some technological solutions to the problem, but the audiovisual aids approach that sprang from their efforts proved to be largely inadequate. Too often, transitions that were made between movies and literacy skills seemed superficial, even artificial. As a result, much of the electronic hardware was shelved during the back-to-basics movement of the '70s.

More recently, however, teachers and researchers are beginning to make stronger, more substantive connections between visual and verbal learning. Cognitive psychologists like Alan Paivio and Gavriel Salomon have shown how the mind stores and manipulates information pictorially as well as linguistically. Books like Robert McKim's Experiences in Visual Thinking present strong evidence that perceptual skills are more complex, more capable

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of sustaining advanced thinking than we generally recognize. Semiologists like Christian Metz and rhetoricians like Ronald Primeau have studied how the fundamental forms used in film and television can be compared to those of written composition. In neurophysiology, discoveries about right and left brain hemispheres have given scientists an anatomical basis for examining the connections between reading and viewing skills. And media-minded teachers of English have continued to do their own classroom research.

My own experiments along these lines were boosted a few years ago by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which supported my efforts to develop a writing course based on the analogy of film as composition. What follows is a brief description of the approach as it is used at Westchester Community College and at other schools where the same principles have been adapted. First, a mild dose of theory; then, some glimpses of the practice.

My first assumption is that film and television are forms of composition. Many of the strategies that writers use to organize their thoughts and to communicate them to an audience are used by filmmakers and television producers. Students who are more familiar with visual media than with print can often recognize patterns of structure and style more readily on the screen than on the page. Once they understand these patterns, and the reasoning behind them, they are often better prepared to see them in their reading and to apply them in their writing.

Second, viewing, like reading, is a cumulative experience. The more films or television programs that our students watch, the easier it is for them to place a given film or program in perspective. Their ability to "contextualize" a given composition--to see it in relation to others of its kind--is precisely what is lacking among many of today's freshmen when it comes to written texts. They fail to understand fully an essay or a novel because they haven't read widely enough to identify the author's style, allusions to a genre, or use of structural conventions. Yet they are surprisingly skillful readers of commercials, soap operas, and disaster films. If we can guide their awareness of how they make sense of a film and demonstrate how reading fiction or expository prose depends on similar skills, we can move many of our students much further along the road to becoming better writers.

Related to this observation is the way prime-time viewing has replaced the core curriculum of former days. The traditional canon of literary classics has given way to TV Guide as an index of our students' shared experiences--that reservoir of values, stories, roles, and general information to which they continually refer, directly or implicitly, in conversation and in writing. The more we understand about this fund of common knowledge shared by veteran viewers, the better we can read what lies between the lines in much of what they say and write.

I also want to emphasize that film and television, like writing, are sign systems. Just as written words stand for concepts or relations beyond themselves, the images of visual media signify experiences beyond the screen. The notion that pictures are more concrete than words, that they bear a greater likeness to the things they represent, should not obscure the fact that a visual language must be learned. It takes considerable training to understand the meaning of a close-up, a flashback, or a montage sequence, and

those who talk about the grammar or the syntax of film recognize that much of what we've learned about the codes of cinema can be applied to verbal languages as well. Where Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and the other early film theorists left off, students of modern semiology have taken up the task of showing how filmmakers and writers construct meaning by manipulating symbols within the context of conventional codes.

Still another assumption I make is that under ordinary circumstances, thinking takes pictorial as well as linguistic forms. To the work of Arnheim, Piaget, and McKim, recent research on mental imagery has added a substantial body of evidence about the role of visualization in human thought. Visual processing appears to be the developmental base on which children build their language skills, and well past the point of linguistic competence, perceptual skills continue to guide much of our most complex and creative thinking. The composing process, what we sometimes too narrowly refer to as writing, involves more visual thinking than we generally acknowledge in the English class. If we define and teach writing in such a way as to exclude mental and external imagery, we may be denying our students access to some of their most powerful tools for thinking and communicating. We need to be more mindful of how our students, as readers, transform written texts into mental pictures and how they try, as writers, to convert their private perceptions into prose.

Finally, there is the social side of reading and viewing. Going to the movies is usually a group experience, and television, even if we watch it by ourselves, fosters a feeling of being in the company of others. Those glimpses of the studio audience, the laugh tracks, the friendliness of newsteam commentators are all meant to include us in the family of viewers. Making films and TV shows are similarly group activities. By contrast, reading and writing are solitary acts. Usually, we read in private to ourselves, and we need to be alone to write. Many of our students feel discomfort with the loneliness of print. Perhaps that's why they like collaborative writing, and it may explain why they prefer to do their reading and their writing as they listen to the radio, or even as they watch TV. These habits give the solitary written word a vocal, musical, and visual accompaniment, creating the kind of sensory environment students have come to expect from electronic media; and they also enliven what must seem comparatively lifeless: the voiceless, faceless letters on the page. I believe this is a key to the failure of so many of our students to involve themselves in books. Accustomed as they are to words interpreted by gestures and inflections, or to seeing words in photographic contexts, they find it difficult to respond to a page of print alone. Without the intonation or the smile to give meaning to these abstract symbols, they fail to appreciate the full value of written words as signs of human interaction. Maybe this is why some students draw a happy face when they write ironic comments in their essays; they're afraid we'll miss the irony without the visual cue.

How do these considerations translate into classroom practice? Let me give a few examples.

Since the analogy of film as composition is central to the method, a good number of my students become involved in film production. They quickly recognize that filmmakers, like writers, go through stages in their work. They explore their subject with the camera, testing different angles, using close-ups and long shots to define the field of view, discovering new

relationships. If the given subject is their school, they soon learn the value of limiting the field to a specific point of view--say, the college's cultural opportunities. They begin to focus on those details that illustrate their chosen theme: scenes of an orchestra rehearsal, tryouts for the drama club, a class in modern dance. During the editing stage of the film, they practice the art of selecting and arranging the best shots in the best order. Trial screenings of the rough assembly help them to revise their work--literally "to see it again" through other eyes and then to decide what needs to be added, cut, or shifted around.

At the same time that they're working on the film, they're also writing essays. Much of what they've learned while filming carries over to their prose. They begin to think of written composition in cinematic terms, and this seems to give a tangible form to what was earlier regarded as a mysterious, abstract process: the God-given gift of writing fluent essays. Now before committing themselves to a single, final draft, they jot down and examine their observations as if recording them on film. Their exploratory lists, like the filmmaker's "rushes," serve as a rich source of ideas and illustrations for discovering what they have to say. In other words, the film model encourages them to practice more of what is sometimes called the invention, or prewriting stage of composition. Meanwhile, the writing desk becomes a kind of editing bench. They begin to see the text as a more plastic medium, responsive to the snip and splice work of expanding, tightening, reshaping, rearranging. And the rough draft functions as a kind of pilot film to test the audience reaction.

Not all students or all classes can make a film, so I've experimented with alternatives. Some groups prefer to make slides for a photographic essay. The methods are different, but the composing skills are essentially the same. Other students produce a story board, a sequence of words and drawings arranged to tell a story or develop an idea. Since this method combines both visual and verbal languages, it is a particularly promising technique. In fact, some of my students--those with artistic talent or those with special language problems--go on to use story boards in the early stage of all their writing. The act of drawing seems to get the pencils moving, frees their store of imagery, and lends a certain lively specificity to what they write. Drawing also serves as a kind of universal language to which foreign language students can refer when finding words to match their observations.

Films can play another role, as visual texts for practicing close reading. Initially, my students are reluctant to criticize each other's written work. They lack confidence in their judgment as readers and as writers. But when I bring in my own home movies, the mystique of critical analysis vanishes amid an uproar of cinematic commentary. They instantly identify all the errors of amateur filmmaking: the cut-off heads, the jerky camera movements, the rapid, often inscrutable shifts from birthday cake to beach to wedding gowns. What's more, they often can draw parallels to their own homemade essays: the problems of focusing, of inconsistent points of view, of insufficient background information, abrupt transitions, and the like. My own errors as a beginning filmmaker seem to make them less uneasy about their efforts as unpracticed writers. Moreover, some of the _espirit de corps_ which comes from responding as a group to films carries over when we start to examine essays as a class. What emerges, I believe, is a

community of critical viewers that later doubles as a community of careful readers.

One of my home movies starts with a barrage of extreme close-ups. It takes a while before my students realize that they're watching a film about a vehicle, a car: my eight-year-old Volvo. Some students don't recognize the subject until they see a long shot of the entire car. What we learn from their responses crops up again in our discussions about writing. What happens when a sequence begins with a series of details rather than with an overview? Is it better to open with a long shot, or with a "topic sentence"? How much information can be left out of the message without baffling or boring the receiver? What inferences can we assume that the viewer or the reader will make? Such questions are essential to all thoughtful filmmaking and writing. They are fundamental elements of composition.

The visual texts are not limited to my summer vacations and my car. I've had special success with short, professionally made films and clips from television. Commercials are particularly effective "model compositions." Much as we may shrink from the idea of introducing "ring around the collar" into the English class, it is worth acknowledging the time, technology, and talent that go into the making of a 60-second spot. Commercials are unusually concise, entertaining, carefully constructed, and ubiquitous. Students who find it hard to talk about the style or structure of an Orwell essay rarely fail to identify the subject, purpose, and intended audience of an ad for Jordache jeans. They may not readily observe that Ruth Benedict is contrasting several cultures in her essay on Indians, or that Jonathan Swift's "Modest Proposal" is a satire. But they quickly see the principle of comparison in a split-screen ad for soft drinks. They recognize the element of irony in the Volkswagen spot that shows a ludicrously stripped-down Beetle getting 84 miles per gallon in a mock mileage test and then makes its point directly--"VW, an honest 25 mpg."

My favorite commercials are the ones which demonstrate that the basic skills of good writing are not confined to "prose models," but are very much alive and doing well in the world of high technology and commercial success. Take the classic television ad made for Volkswagen in the years before inflation. It began with a long shot of two identical suburban houses. "Mr. Jones and Mr. Krempler were neighbors," intones the narrator. "Each had $3,000." Then we saw an American car pull into one driveway. "With his money," explains the voice, "Mr. Jones bought a new car." Next, a parade of men arrived, carrying crates up the other driveway: "With his money, Mr. Krempler bought a new electric range, a stereo, a refrigerator, two television sets...and a brand new Volkswagen." The contrast was superb. What better supporting details to drive home the main idea? But the best part was the clincher: "Now Mr. Jones faces the age old problem--keeping up with the Kremplers."

Or maybe you remember the commercial that went like this: "This is the foot that kicked the skate that swung the door that hit the vase that pushed the light that toppled the table that scared the dog that bumped the chair that collapsed the wall that belonged to the lucky guy who was insured by Continental Insurance." Who could ask for a better introduction to the uses and abuses of cause and effect?

When I want to stress the use of style to appeal to a specific audience, I bring in some commercials for familiar beverages. We watch Jimmy Breslin tell his barroom pals that "Piels is a good drinkin' beer." We listen to Orson Welles, sipping wine on his veranda and thumbing a copy of Gone With the Wind, as he compares the writing of a good book to the making of a fine wine. Why? Because "Paul Masson will sell no wine before its time." And we see a flashy montage of young athletes batting up, running up, and otherwise moving up to 7-Up. It is no problem to identify the intended viewers for these ads or to point out stylistic features which were chosen to appeal to each group: the actors, the diction, the clothes, the background music, the pacing of the images. Once the relationship of style and audience has been thus understood, we move on to written texts and try to see how similar effects can be achieved by words alone.

I should explain that movies and commercials do not dominate the course. We do a lot of writing and close reading. The trick, I find, is to make gradual, logical, substantive connections between pictorial and printed forms of composition so that the underlying principles and skills can reinforce each other.

Let me give one more example. Making a decision is a crucial skill. My students are continually faced with choices, both in and out of school, and I want them to be able to use writing as a way to clarify alternatives, to weigh their options, and to arrive at reasonable conclusions. We begin by examining commercials that compare products. Some use a split screen for point by point comparison. A Chevette and an AMC Spirit are displayed side by side and rated for size, economy, and safety. Other commercials display the products in a sequence, like the ad that shows the Duke of Klaxon's fleet of cars parading one by one before his door until he picks an Audi, the automobile that combines the best features of the lot. At this point, we simply notice what is being compared, the bases of comparison, and the rhetorical structures which highlight the best selling points. Next, we see a short film, entitled That's Me (1971). Alan Arkin plays the part of a high school dropout who is visited in Central Park by a well-intentioned social worker. The film is longer, subtler than the ads, but it too makes a comparison: two men, two lifestyles, two contrasting sets of values. Again, we analyze the texts, trying to identify the main points of comparison, the advantages and disadvantages of each choice. Then students write essays based on an important decision they face: which car to buy, which school to transfer to, which part-time job to take. I stress that writing can be a vehicle for exploring possibilities, like the Arkin film. I also point out that some writers, like the makers of commercials, use essays to present their final judgments, clearly and persuasively, to a specific audience. But whatever paths my students follow, their writing is invariably informed by the visual compositions that we've seen or practiced, and by our discussions of them.

Neuroscientists use the word cross-talk to describe the communication that takes place between the left, language-oriented hemisphere of the brain and the right, visually-oriented hemisphere. Our profession needs more cross-talk. We need a more constructive dialogue between the image and the word. If the promises of greater access to higher education made during the '70s are to be supported by corresponding pedagogies in the '80s, we need to strengthen the connections between the nation's need for literacy and its advances in technology, between verbal and visual forms of learning. More

cross-talk, I believe, can make a difference in our classes. More important, it can make a difference in our students. It may well make the difference between a split brain and an integrated mind. In the future, it may mean the difference between a divided culture and a unified society.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Note: A complete bibliography appears at the back of Costanzo's Double Exposure: Composing Through Writing and Film.

EXCERPTS FROM LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FILM AND WRITING MANUAL

A small group of faculty at LaGuardia Community College, interested in encouraging the use of film to motivate writing, have reviewed over 100 films in the College's collection and selected thirty-six which they then incorporated in Film and Writing: A Guide for Using Films in the Writing Class, published by Media Services at the college.

The group's basic premise was that students' familiarity with film can be put to advantage in the classroom. Students are conditioned by visual media and, consequently, sometimes feel that words and writing are not important. Yet behind each film they see is the written word: dialogue, plot, and a shooting script. While they are more familiar, and perhaps more relaxed, with the structure and vocabulary of film than they are with writing, they may not realize the dependency of the one mode of expression on the other. Films, therefore, can be used to reinforce the work of the writing teacher in several ways. First, film can motivate students to write on particular themes by interesting them in and exciting them about specific content areas. Second, film can help them develop a sense of form. By tracing the movement of word to visual image, and then completing the cycle back to the word of the written essay, the instructor can demonstrate the continuing importance of the written word in all forms of communication. Third, direct recording of film images on to paper can help create detail and example in writing.

The study materials prepared for the manual emphasize the collaborative approach to learning. Each film synopsis is followed by a series of study questions to be discussed in groups before the film is shown and before the essay topics are given, so that students can anticipate and learn something about the film ahead of time.

The manual includes a thematic table of contents, but it does not offer either a rhetorical strategy or suggestions for use of the film in a particular course. It is intended that the film synopses with the running time will give the teacher enough information to assess the approach, course level content and the amount of necessary classroom time. The thematic approach permits greater exploration of the use of film in the classroom. Clearly, as the following Thematic Table of Contents illustrates, an entire writing course could be centered around any one of a number of the thematic clusters the manual defines:

The Media Committee that developed the manual from which this article was excerpted was chaired by Leonard Vogt, Associate Professor of English at LaGuardia Community College. Other members of the Committee were: Michael Blaine, Bill Grauer (Media Services), Vivia Heron, Susan O'Malley, and Marc Prinz (Writing Center).

THEMATIC TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Time
THEME - Growing up: Child development and maturation	
Animal War, Animal Peace	30 min.
Development	26 min.
Cognitive Development	18 min.
Emotional Development: Aggression	19 min.
Four Families	60 min.
High School	74 min.
Child's Play and the Real World	16 min.
The Pre-School Experience	22 min.
Not Me Alone	31 min.
Young Children of the Kibbutz	20 min.
THEME - Ethnic studies and cultural difference	
Black History	54 min.
Cave People of the Philippines	38 min.
Four Families	60 min.
My Childhood - James Baldwin/Hubert Humphrey	60 min.
Peru - The Sun People	24 min.
Prejudice: Causes, Consequences, Cures	24 min.
What Can You Do?	16 min.
Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker	61 min.
Martin Luther King: From Montgomery to Memphis	26 min.
THEME - Work, labor, and business	
Handle with Care	25 min.
Salt of the Earth	94 min.
What Can You Do?	16 min.
Communication	25 min.
Modern Times	89 min.
Rosie the Riveter	60 min.
THEME - Comedy	
Hogs Wild	26 min.
The Music Box	24 min.
The Immigrants	20 min.
Modern Times	89 min.
The Tramp	20 min.
Easy Street	20 min.
THEME - Women's issues	
Salt of the Earth	94 min.
Not Me Alone	31 min.
Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker	61 min.
Rosie the Riveter	60 min.

THEME - Political struggle

Animal War, Animal Peace	30 min.
Black History	54 min.
High School	74 min.
Prejudice (Causes, Consequences, Cures)	24 min.
Salt of the Earth	94 min.
What Can You Do?	16 min.
Modern Times	89 min.
Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker	61 min.
Martin Luther King: From Montgomery to Memphis	26 min.
Rosie the Riveter	60 min.

THEME - Miscellaneous film explorations

Future Shock	42 min.
Monkey, Apes and Man	52 min.
Seven for Suzie	14 min.
Why Man Creates	29 min.
Alone in the Midst of the Land	27 min.
The LaGuardia Story	60 min.

Reproduced below are three of the film listings with their accompanying lessons. The first, Black History, is included under the themes "Ethnic Studies and Cultural Difference" and "Political Struggle." The second, Emotional Development: Aggression, is included with a cluster of films arranged under the theme, "Growing Up: Child Development and Maturation." The third, the classic Charlie Chaplin film, Modern Times, is included under several categories including "Comedy," "Political Struggle," and "Work, Labor and Business."

Black History 54 min.

Narrated by Bill Cosby, this excellent film depicts how blacks have been robbed of their history. Many black contributions to history have been left out of the history texts. Many distortions of black reality have occurred, especially through the use of movies. The rather long middle section of this film chronicles the image of blacks in films from Birth of a Nation to Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. The film's final section shows a classroom in which a black teacher attempts to de-program his black students of white values.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of "unknown" historical contributions have blacks made?

2. Why are the drawings of white children and black children so different?

3. Discuss the various negative images which movies have given of blacks.

4. In the last section of the film, how was the teacher trying to re-educate his students?

TOPICS FOR WRITING:

1. How have you been mis-educated in terms of your history books? If you are a minority (black, Hispanic, woman, gay) did you find yourself adequately represented in the history courses you have taken?

2. Are there differences between white values and black values? If so, give specific examples.

3. According to the film, what were some of the differences between black family life in Africa and black family life under slavery in America?

4. Take a film or TV show you recently have seen that has prominent black characters and discuss if this film or TV show accurately portrays black life.

Emotional Development: Aggression 19 min.

This film examines the theory that aggression, in both children and adults, is a behavior that is learned in social context. To arrive at this conclusion, the film asks a number of questions: Where does aggression come from? Is aggression innate? Is aggression socially learned? If so, how? The film also explores ways of discouraging aggression. As a final comment, the film suggests that aggressive skills are now out of date for human survival; the time has come to replace aggression with alternative behaviors.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. How does the film suggest aggressive skills are learned? Give examples.

2. How are aggressive skills maintained and reinforced?

3. Review the ways the film offers to discourage aggression. Give examples.

4. In what kinds of activities does society program and condone aggressive behavior and reward it? Spectator sports, business, war?

TOPICS FOR WRITING:

1. Are you an aggressive person? If so, how did you get that way?

2. Which of your parents is the more aggressive?

3. Describe the most aggressive member of your family.

4. How does television teach aggression?

5. If you have an aggressive child, how did he/she get that way?

6. What kind of cooperation techniques, rather than aggressive techniques, do you use?

7. Describe an aggressively violent act you recently have observed.

Modern Times 89 min.

This classic film with Charlie Chaplin shows the exploitation of the assembly line and the effects of the Depression on the American worker. A mixture of comedy, tragedy, and politics, the film shows Chaplin at his most brilliant. Every generation of new students, and writers, can benefit from and enjoy this film.

TOPICS FOR WRITING:

The study questions for this film are included in the preparation for the writing topic.

To save time, you can show only the first twenty minutes of the film, up until Chaplin is caught in the machinery, since this segment is self-contained and makes a powerful statement about assembly line work.

Before showing the film, spend about five minutes explaining the rationale for using the film (to use film images to provide the words for paragraph development), who Chaplin was, what the film is about, that it was silent (although now dubbed and with a music soundtrack for modern tastes), and that it will be used to generate a paper during the next two class periods.

After showing the first twenty minutes of the film, put students in groups and ask each group to write down the sequence of images and events they remember from the screen. Then, moving from group to group, ask what the images mean. Simultaneously, you can clarify what students saw (some groups miss the opening shot of the clock, other groups see pigs instead of sheep) and comment on working conditions on the assembly line (the boss as Big Brother, speed up, the feeding machine, the physical and psychic damage of repetitious work, and Chaplin finally being devoured by the machine itself).

Each group of students then works up an outline using the events of the first twenty minutes of the film to generate their thesis and supporting paragraphs on a paper on the exploitation of assembly line workers.

* * *

Note: A complete copy of the manual from which this article is excerpted is available on request to Leonard Vogt, English Department, LaGuardia Community College, 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, New York 11101.

SELECTED LIST OF CONSORTIUM FILMS

Following is a list of Consortium-owned films cited in the various articles. The CUNY branch(es) from which the films may be borrowed and running times for each work are noted. Since the computer-printout was last distributed in 1982, it is possible that individual branches own other films cited in the articles. It is also likely that many other films cited, especially the popular films, are available in video cassette format. Instructors should consult CUNY audiovisual departments for information on how to obtain films.

KEY: Baruch (BA), Borough of Manhattan (BMCC), Bronx Community (BCC), Brooklyn (BR), City (C), Hostos (HO), Hunter (HU), John Jay (JJ), Kingsborough (K), LaGuardia (LG), Lehman (LE), Medgar Evers (ME), New York City Technical (NYCT), Queens (Q), Queensborough (QCC), College of Staten Island (SI), York (Y).

Name of Film	Running Time	Owned By
Alone in the Midst of the Land	27 mins.	LG
Animal Farm	73 mins.	LG, ME
Attica	80 mins.	JJ, ME
Baggage	22 mins.	JJ
Battle of San Pietro, The	30 mins.	BA
Beauty Knows No Pain	25 mins.	Q
Before the First Word	29 mins.	BA, BCC
Birth Without Violence: Gentle Birth	21 mins.	BCC
Black History	54 mins.	BMCC, JJ, LG, ME, Q, Y
Campaign: American Style	39 mins.	SI
Chairy Tale, A	10 mins.	BA
Child's Eye View, A	23 mins.	Q
City, The	33 mins.	HU
Clay, or the Origin of the Species	8 mins.	SI
Cosmic Zoom	8 mins.	K, SI
Critic, The	5 mins.	K, SI

Name of Film	Running Time	Owned By
Dead Birds	83 mins.	BA, C, JJ, LG, ME, Q, Y
Dream of Wild Hourses, A	9 mins.	SI
Emily Dickinson: A Certain Slant of Light	29 mins.	BCC
Emotional Development: Aggression	19 mins.	LG, ME
Essay on War, An	23 mins.	BCC
Except the People	20 mins.	BCC
Expressway to Your Heart	16 mins.	BA
Eye of the Storm, The	25 mins.	BCC, C, JJ, K, Q
Film	2 mins.	Q, SI
Flatland	12 mins.	Y
Frank Film	9 mins.	C
Free	12 mins.	ME
Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker	61 mins.	LG
Garden Party, The	24 mins.	Y
Great Ecstasy of the Sculptor Steiner, The	45 mins.	Q
Growing Up Female	60 mins.	JJ, SI, Y
Hamlet	152 mins.	JJ
Hand, The	19 mins.	SI, Y
Hangman	12 mins.	BCC, H, SI
Hardtime	27 mins.	JJ
Harlem Wednesday	10 mins.	BCC
Harvest of Shame	54 mins.	BA, HO, H, Q, QCC, Y
Hat, The: Is This War Necessary?	18 mins.	H, Y
High School	74 mins.	LG, Q
Hiroshima, Mon Amour	88 mins.	Q

Name of Film	Running Time	Owned By
Hiroshima Nagasaki: August 1945	16 mins.	BCC, LG, SI
Hospital	75 mins.	B, LG
Interpretations and Values	28 mins.	BCC
Jazzoo	13 mins.	Y
Jogger, The	9 mins.	JJ, Y
Journey, A	12 mins.	ME
Just Lather, That's All	21 mins.	BCC
King Kong (original)	111 mins.	QCC
Lady or the Tiger, The	15 mins.	B
Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias	20 mins.	SI
Land Without Bread	28 mins.	QCC
Lapis	10 mins.	H
Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, The	60 mins.	BA, LG
Line is a Line is a Line, A	6 mins.	SI
Lord of the Flies	90 mins.	ME
Lottery, The	18 mins.	BA, BCC
Luke Was There	33 mins.	BCC
Man of Aran	77 mins.	SI
Men's Lives	43 mins.	QCC
Modern Times	89 mins.	LG
Movie, A	2 mins.	Q
Mr. Frenhofer and the Minotaur	21 mins.	QCC
Murder One	59 mins.	JJ
My Childhood	51 mins.	C, LG
My Name is Oona	10 mins.	Q
Nanook of the North	60 mins.	BA, BCC, C, JJ, SI, Y

Name of Film	Running Time	Owned By
Neighbors	9 mins.	BA, JJ
New York, New York	6 mins.	Y
Night and Fog	31 mins.	BA,BCC,LE,JJ,QCC,SI,Y
Night Mail	25 mins.	QCC, SI
No. 00173	8 mins.	BA
Obedience	45 mins.	BA,BCC,C,KK,L,Q,QCC,SI,Y
Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge, An	27 mins.	BA, BCC, K, Q, SI, Y
Omega	13 mins.	KCC
Open Window, The	12 mins.	BA
Organism	20 mins.	SI
Paul's Case	55 mins.	B
Pas de Deux	54 mins.	BA, BCC, JJ, Q, Y
Permutations	7 mins.	BA, Q
Plow that Broke the Plains, The	21 mins.	BA,Q
Potemkin	67 mins.	BA, BCC, Q, SI
Power and the Land	40 mins.	C
Quiet One, The	67 mins.	BCC, C
Renaissance	10 mins.	SI
Rink, The	22 mins.	SI
Rivers of Sand	83 mins.	ME
Salt of the Earth	94 mins.	HO, LG, SI
Scenes from Under Childhood: Selection No. 1	25 mins.	Q
Sea Travels	11 mins.	BA
Searching Eye, The	18 mins.	SI, Q
Silent Snow, Secret Snow	17 mins.	BA, BCC, Y
Star Spangled Banner	5 mins.	BA

Name of Film	Running Time	Owned By
Summerhill	28 mins.	JJ, K, Q, SI
Summperplay	14 mins.	BCC
Thank You Masked Man	8 mins.	BA
That's Me	15 mins.	BA, BCC, HO, H, ME, SI
Third Avenue El	11 mins.	Q, Y
Thirty-Nine Steps, The	80 mins.	SI
Thursday's Children	28 mins.	BA, H, Q
Time Piece	8 mins.	BA, BCC, ME, Y
Triumph of the Will	120 mins.	C
Titicut Follies	85 mins.	SI, Q
Two Men and a Wardrobe	15 mins.	HO, Q, SI, Y
Uncle Tom's Cabin	14 mins.	Q
Union Maids	50 mins.	LG, Q
Welfare	167 mins.	Q
Why Man Creates	29 mins.	BA, LG, LE, K, Q, SI
Wild Child	85 mins.	Q
With Babies and Banners	45 mins.	Q